

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S A FLYING MAN

A LOOK INTO THE 'FLYING' PARAMOTOR
PARTICIPANTS OF INDIANAPOLIS

By Simone Bender **REPORTER**

Some people think he doesn't exist, some people think they're hallucinating when they see him, but yes, the man who can be seen flying over Avon on his mysterious flying machine is indeed very real.

His name is Jason Dodd and while his work is intriguing, he isn't as mysterious as most would think.

Dodd is a licensed pilot and aviation enthusiast who has been involved in the art of powered paragliding (PPG) for six years after looking for a more cost-effective way to fly upon his move to Indiana six years ago.

"My son Reece actually made me aware of the sport of paramotoring at that time and I looked into it," said Dodd. "It turned out that one of the best places to get training in this sport exists just south of Indianapolis near Franklin. I went down to Midwest PPG... and was hooked immediately [so I] signed up for training."

Dodd said that flying of any kind has always been a passion of his, but that PPG's ultralight aircraft was a type of flight that could feel purely recreational.

"You can smell the campfire, feel the air get cold when you descend, see the deer running below you, wave at the people in their back yards, and watch a sunset from 2,000 feet," said Dodd. "It's an amazing combination of flying, but being able to see, feel, and experience what's going on right below you."

The machine he flies over Avon is

made of two main parts: the wing, to generate the lift of the aircraft, and the paramotor to create the thrust and power. Both pieces make up major parts of the takeoff, flight, and landing processes.

"As far as aviation goes, flying a paramotor is incredibly safe. With this type of equipment, even if the motor stops. The wing continues to fly. [You] can continue to fly your wing, pick a spot to land, and set it down gently in a field with short grass, soybeans, a driveway, or a road without traffic on it," said Dodd.

Dodd said that to add another level of safety when using PPG, he collaborates with a group of other flyers to ensure the conditions are secure enough to fly in.

"Assuming it's forecast to be lower than [10 mph], then I'll plan to go out to the airport about two or three hours before dark," said Dodd. "There is a specific process I go through every time I inspect my



Photos by Jason Dodd



Jason Dodd and his son Reece have been interested in powered paragliding for the six years since they moved to Indiana.

motor to be sure I'm checking all of the safety features."

Dodd said that one of the most important features he inspects is the harness, which is used to secure the paramotor to his back and allow him to pilot the aircraft.

"I'll put the paramotor on my back, attach the safety straps and start the motor to allow it to warm up and make sure it's functioning properly. At that point, it's time to make sure I have a clear path to take off and that nobody else next to me is in the process of taking off or landing. You go to full power on your motor and run hard for about 20 yards. You'll then lift off and be in the air!" said Dodd.

Dodd said that being able to pilot paramotors in a group is one of the things that makes the process so

enjoyable.

"For me and my sons to go fly together on a nice summer evening is certainly not too comparable to anything else I've done," said Dodd.

Dodd said that PPG is one of the purest forms of flight he has ever experienced and incapable of comparing to any other form of recreation in the Midwest.

"I'd love more people to be curious about general aviation in whole. There are so many opportunities for people of any age to watch, get involved, or even get rated and fly so many varieties of aircraft. It's a wonderful safe community and those that fly love nothing more than to share the sport with others," said Dodd.

Find more info at indyppg.com