

I.F. Person of the Year 2008

Tim Tessier

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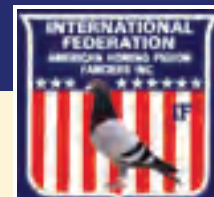
Everyone talks about the need to grow the Pigeon Racing Sport, but, very few people do anything about it....

except Tim. Tim Tessier has been racing pigeons since he was a kid. He wanted to share his love of the birds and the sport with kids by introducing them to pigeons on a small scale. The side benefit would be that the kids would learn and grow, while also having a great time. Along with his friend, Jim Brazeau, he started the Northwest Junior Flyers in 2002, with just 5 members. The five original members all had someone in their family who was in the pigeon sport already. But he didn't stop there.

The Northwest Junior Flyers have grown to 60+ junior members and about a dozen adult members. This didn't just happen. Tim was the motivator behind this phenomenal growth. He knew that first, kids had to touch the pigeons and be won over by the animals and the stories of their amazing abilities. So, he brought the pigeons to the Cummington Fair, (Cummington, Ma) in 2002 to show them off, releasing them with messages from the kids, that were later mailed back to them.

Then, he knew that starting a pigeon loft had to be easy enough for kids to do, with a little help from their parents, so he developed a loaner loft program, delivering small lofts in the back of a truck to new flyers. The loaner loft houses 8-10 birds. This keeps the project small enough to be within the capabilities of the kids to clean, feed and handle their team of birds. Tim and his cadre of dedicated pigeon fanciers and parents, would also vaccinate the birds, provide medications and wormer, and detailed and constant supervision of the whole project.

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Lastly, he knew that the kids needed positive re-enforcement without too many heartbreaks, so he kept the races they participated in short, thereby minimizing bird losses for the kids.

The race winners get beautiful and very impressive trophies. Tim is also the publicity rep for the club, making sure the local papers are fully informed of the winners and pictures are readily available. He makes up and posts fliers with his phone number on it to call for Free Racing Pigeons! He does have the advantage of living in a rural area where zoning regulations are not a problem. This helps considerably.

Now, how is this all funded? Well, the kids do a lot of work to raise money. There is also an annual auction of pigeons, both youngsters and breeders, donated by fliers throughout the country. Both the kids and local flyers buy them. This helps fund the loaner loft program. But, it seems there is also a steady trickle of funds coming in from the Tessier Sugar House, and also a corporate sponsor, Florence Precision. Guess who owns that!

After just 5 years, the pigeons were such a big hit at the Cummington Fair, that they were given their own permanent display building, a 14 X 28 foot barn. The kids painted and decorated it, filling it with information and displays about their birds.

Tim Tessier's efforts in building the sport in Massachusetts has been nothing short of outstanding, benefiting both the racing pigeon sport and the youths that participate. He is a most deserving candidate for I.F. Person of the Year Award. •

Above: Tim Tessier is picture with Kayle Bak and Jeff Haskell (VP of Northwest Junior Flyers) in front of his passion the loaner loft he builds himself.