



# Northwest Junior Flyers

**By: Jacob Lyons, Racing Secretary**

## **Northwest Junior Flyers Racing Pigeon Club**

It seems like only yesterday, but it has been over four years since the Northwest Junior Flyers started. When its doors first opened in 2002, there was only five members, and only one of those did not have relatives involved in the hobby. Now the club has had an exponential growth of members in the past two years, and the majority of members in the club has shifted to those that do not have relatives that were members of the Northwest Racing Pigeon Club, the club that existed prior to the Northwest Junior Flyers. With more new members walking in each year, the club has finally begun to work on its ultimate goal of getting more kids involved in pigeon racing.

2006 has marked a terrific year for the Northwest Junior Flyers because, for the first time, new members of the club have had the courage to let their birds make the journey home from a long flight. 2006 also marked the first time a person who didn't have relatives in the former club has won a race.

Some of the new members of the club have come by word of mouth, but most of the members have joined from our very successful booth at the Cummington Fair in Cummington, MA. When it first started, our booth at the Cummington Fair had two goals: to make money and to attract new members. It didn't take long for us to figure out, however, that trying to make money for the club was unsuccessful, and that our efforts should be put mostly into trying to attract interest in the club and new members for the club.

When we first opened our booth three years ago, we raffled a pigeon coop, build and paid for by Florence Precision and its workers, intended to both attract interest and to make money, but the pigeon coop didn't attract many buyers, and it ended up being used as a shed. We also attempted to raffle off pigeons at a price per ticket, but didn't have much success with that either, as we found out that it was illegal to raffle off animals for money. We were left to raffle off the birds free of charge in future years, which later helped our booth become more successful in future years.

We experienced the same trouble with the coop raffle the following year, except this time the coop went to the use of chickens. Even though the coop again didn't go to a potential pigeon flyer, we still managed to attract a small amount of members to the club. The "Free Pigeon Raffle" signs attracted many more potential flyers to the booth than the "Pigeon Raffle: 1 for \$1, 6 for \$5" we had last year. The pigeon raffle let people own a fairly cost-efficient and useful animal at no cost, and get

their interest focused on homing pigeons.

The booth of 2005 was the start of an idea at the fair that we hope could continue for the remainder of the years that we have a booth there: demonstrations. We let birds make their way home from the fair twice that glorious weekend, which attracted more people to the booth and left them asking when they were going to fly again. The pigeon coop, for the first time in three tries, had finally gone to a person who had plans to actually own pigeons and use it as a coop. The interest and the new members attracted from this fair made the membership of the club grow exponentially.

The most recent Cummington Fair in late August of 2006 was arguably the most successful of the experiences at the fair. It attracted as many (if not more) members than 2005, even without leaving people's jaws dropped like they were the previous year when the pigeons made their flights home from the fair. There was no coop raffled off in 2006, but a hutch was raffled off as well as a wishing well were raffled off, appealing to more audiences, and pulling in more money for the club. Even though there wasn't a pigeon loft raffled off, there was still a loft at the fair proudly being displayed at our booth, thanks to the workers of Florence Precision and members of the club, both kids and adults. ChartPak, a company based in Leeds (Northampton) Massachusetts that makes various stationary supplies kindly donated the wood for the loft. This past fair also marked the first ever pigeon show at the Cummington Fair, which had many of the members involved while it also drew in many people to see their elegant beauty.

Each year the fair has gotten more and more successful, partly because of the members of the club and their hard work to prepare for the booth each year, and also partly the people who support the club each year with donations, new memberships, and raffle ticket purchases. If you live in or around Western Massachusetts and are free in the end of August, come see our booth at the Cummington Fair from August 23-26, 2007. For those of you who are members or supporters of the club, thank you for your continuous support each year at the fair and also throughout the flying seasons. ❏