

LAUNCHING AIRPARK



Jeff Goldwater/Staff Photographer

Volunteer Barry James paints part of a U-2 at Heritage Airpark before the annual dinner to honor aerospace workers.

Dinner set to mark official opening

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PALMDALE — Some 370 people will gather tonight at Plant 42's Heritage Airpark for the city's annual dinner honoring aerospace workers.

Already sold out, the dinner will take place under a tent among the display of vintage jets and will serve as the formal grand opening for the airpark.

"It'll be very cool. We are ready to open it up, show it off," Mayor James Ledford said.

The dinner, held annually since 1998, recognizes workers from BAE Systems, The Boeing Co., Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co. and Northrop Grumman and honors their contributions to Palmdale's history, economy and culture.

The keynote speaker will be Air Force Brig. Gen. R. Stephen Ritchie, the last American to earn the title of ace by shooting down five enemy planes. He shot down five North Vietnamese MiG-21 fighter jets in 1972.

The airpark, which has been



A worker assembles a tent for the dinner planned at Heritage Airpark in Palmdale. The keynote speaker will be a Vietnam ace, Air Force Brig. Gen. R. Stephen Ritchie.

open to the public since January, contains nine aircraft built or modified at Air Force Plant 42 or with other connections to

the Antelope Valley.

When the 26.4-acre park is completed, it will display more than 40 aircraft.

The park at 2001 E. Ave. P is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.