



First-timers enter at lower speeds than experienced flyers at Paraclete XP SkyVenture.

Flying in a wind tunnel is no breeze, *but it can be a blast*



Bodyflight facility in Raeford draws pros and visitors from around the globe

By Karen Olson House

Paraclete XP SkyVenture

190 Paraclete Drive
Raeford, NC, 28376

(910) 848-2600, (888) 4SKYFUN
www.paracletexp.com

If they were nervous, the men from 1stst Battalion, 321st Airborne, were good at hiding it. They methodically suited up, then lined up next to the wind tunnel's door. As each man took his first flight, the others watched carefully. Despite the instructor's help, a beginner can unknowing lift an arm or leg slightly and blow his balancing act, causing him to tilt, spin or flail about like an airborne clown.

Although none of these paratroopers had ever sky-dived, their static line-jumping experience helped, and all five did fine. After they peeled off their helmets, a couple said they appreciated "not being attached to anything."

The men have just experienced bodyflight in the world's largest vertical wind tunnel, located in laid-back Raeford in Hoke County. Its siren song has lured novelty-seekers, military personnel and skydiving professionals since it opened in late 2007.

It can be a lot of fun, but flying in a vertical wind tunnel is no breeze. Flyers wear earplugs, elbow and knee pads, goggles, helmets, Velcro windsuits, and sneakers, because slip-on shoes can fly off. To enter, you stand inside the tunnel's narrow doorway and fall trustingly forward, where you are swooped up by a very strong vertical column

of air. One wrong twist, and you can bounce against the mesh-grid floor or against the walls. But once you get the hang of working with the wind, it can be a real blast.

Late morning, a family from Apex arrive. Mom Stephanie Hughes clicked her camera while husband Todd, the children, and grandmother Maureen enthusiastically suited up. There are plenty of grins, and when Maureen finishes her second flight, loud clapping.

From tunnel rats to pro skydivers

Paraclete XP Sky Venture's three-story facility stands out amid pine forests and cotton fields on a stretch of U.S. Hwy. 401, about 15 miles west of Fayetteville. Inside, its wind tunnel is a cylinder-shaped chamber 16 feet by 4 inches in diameter and 51 feet tall. A recirculating system, aided by four massive 541-horsepower fans and movable aluminum valves, creates a powerful aerodynamic loop capable of wind speeds up to 185 mph. To compare, a Category 5 hurricane—the most forceful there is—carries winds greater than 155 mph.

A "driver" in a control booth adjusts the tunnel's speed according to a flyer's size, expertise and fitness level. Experienced flyers bound around at full speed (185 mph), but first-time

FREE Hearing Aid Catalog

Shop by mail and Save 80%

adult flyers generally “enter” around 60 percent of full speed (111 mph). Children start at lower speeds that depend on several factors.

For tunnel rats and pro skydivers, Raeford’s attraction is “da bomb.” They can hone skills and practice freefalls in a fraction of the time and expense it takes up yonder. Skydiving teams eagerly zoom across continents to synchronize four- and eight-way formations here.

Paraclete’s instructors, mostly in their 20s and early 30s, are accomplished skydivers. First-time flyers watch a short video and an instructor shows three hand signals to use. If flyers wish to leave the tunnel early they are told to give a thumbs-down signal, twice quickly. They fine-tune their flying positions face down on a padded horizontal trainer. Paraclete offers several flight packages for individuals and groups. A basic flight session costs \$54.

Paraclete’s president and owner Tim D’Annunzio was a skydiver with the U.S. Army Gold Knights parachute jump team. In 2006, the former NASA engineer sold a company he founded, Paraclete Armor & Equipment, Inc., and then erected Paraclete XP SkyVenture.

Electric power service to Paraclete’s state-of-the-art facility comes from Lumbee River EMC. “They’ve been great,” marketing manager Wendy David says. “We’ve had no electrical problems.”



To see a video of the writer taking her first flight, click on “Indoor Skydiving with Carolina Country.” Watch staff writer Karen House soar, fall and attempt to negotiate hurricane-force blasts in Raeford’s vertical wind tunnel.

- **Products praised by The Wall Street Journal**
- **100% Risk-FREE offer**
- **45-day home trial**
- **Arrives ready to use**
- **FREE shipping**
- **Compare to hearing aids costing \$1,000 or more**

Our Customers Say it Best!

Customer comments printed with permission. Individual results may vary.

“Price is right! Works better than aids I bought locally.” F.E. – Texas

“I like the way it fits. I can hear really well with it. For the first time I can hear my granddaughter talk.” I.J. – North Dakota

“I can hear the TV and understand the words which I could not do with my \$5,000 aid.” M.L. – California

Shop-from-home Hearing Aid Catalog

High-quality hearing aids priced at far less than the national average. **Call for free info: 1-800-782-6316**



Ready to use In-the-Ear Hearing Aids



Custom Fit In-the-Ear Hearing Aids



Behind-the-Ear Hearing Aids

© Hearing Help Express®, Inc.

How do you save so much?

Hearing aids have never been more expensive. Most hearing aids cost more than \$1,800...but not from Hearing Help Express®!

You can SAVE 80%! How do you save so much? You order from home and your hearing aids are delivered to your door. You avoid big mark-ups, long waits, and salesmen. Your low price is based on high volume and low overhead.

Improve your hearing Risk-FREE!

Improve your hearing risk-free for 45 days in your own home! Compare our hearing aids to those costing \$1,000 and more. We only sell genuine hearing aids. **100% money-back guarantee!** Order by mail from a family business with over 600,000 satisfied customers and 29 years experience selling hearing aids by mail.

Call today for your **FREE** catalog!

1-800-782-6316 ext. 03-301

SEND NO MONEY! Clip and mail this coupon today for your free catalog.

YES! I would like a free shop-from-home hearing aid catalog. I understand there is no obligation and I get FREE shipping. www.HearingHelpExpress.com/03301

Dr./Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Mail to:
Hearing Help Express
105 North First St., Dept 03-301
DeKalb, IL 60115-0586