

# Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-in returns this fall

*This year will feature a shark shaped hot air balloon and numerous fun aviation inspired events*

**BY GREG PETERSON**  
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MT. VERNON — Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-in is coming back this fall with fun aviation activities.

The family friendly weekend long event will be on October 16, 17, and 18 at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, and it will incorporate what was previously known as the Little Egypt Fly-in and Veter-

ans reunion rolling it into one amazing event.

According to event coordinator Jennifer Witzel, the Fly-in occurred for many years before joining the balloons.

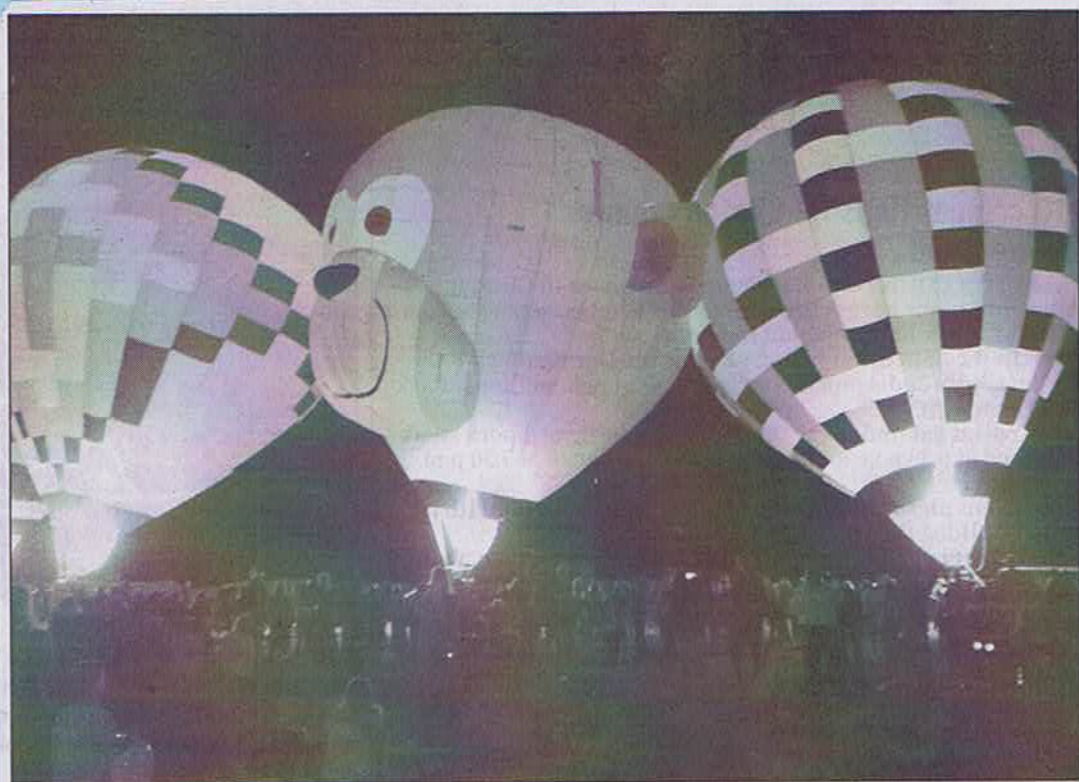
"The mission of Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-in is to promote the general love and education of aviation while giving back to the community, and that is exactly what we plan on doing with

a weekend full of activities," stated Witzel.

Balloons over Mt. Vernon will feature 20 hot air balloons with the star of the show being "Sharky," a special shaped balloon that has the likeness of a shark. Witzel informed that Sharky is being brought to town by the generosity of the RARE Chop House.

The event will once again have a tether balloon where attendees can have a bit of an experience as to what it is like to fly in a hot air balloon for a minimal fee. Witzel said that the tether balloon is being made possible thanks to

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Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

**BALLOON GLOW** — The 2013 balloon glow at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport features numerous hot air balloons including Gordo the Monkey. This year, Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-in will have Sharkey the shark-shaped balloon in attendance.



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Country Financial.

Friday evening of Balloons Over Mt. Vernon will once again light up the sky with colorful balloons during the United Way Balloon Glow presented by Flo Gas.

"Flo Gas have been great to work with the past two years by providing the propane for the balloons for the event, so we really wanted to thank them this year by having them recognized during the crowd pleasing part of the event," stated Witzel.

She also informed that RARE Chop House is partnering to provide VIP seating for the Balloon Glow and more details will be released in the future.

To stay true to the nature of the fly-in, having several WWI and WWII airplanes on display is currently in the works.

Witzel said, "We have the WWI Curtis Jenny, P51 mustang, and PV2 Harpoon joining us. The P51 mustang will be selling rides. If anyone is interested in sponsoring any of these planes, we are looking at offering a sponsor ride with the sponsorship package."

As part of the Fly-in, individuals who would like to fly their plane in for breakfast and the event are invited to do so. Witzel said that there also other aircraft and military equipment on display

for the weekend.

Another aspect of Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-in will be showcasing local veterans and the Veterans Hall of Honor and Military Museum at the airport.

Saturday morning will once again have the US Bank Duck Drop. Witzel commented, "This will be a show to see in itself." She also indicated that during the morning flight on Saturday, the YMCA will be holding a "Run with the Balloons" around the pond there at the airport.

She said, "For all of the race enthusiasts, this will be a race like no other. After the race and the balloon flight, attendees won't want to miss the United Way Pancake breakfast."

During the day on Saturday, there will also have Young Eagle rides where children aged 8 to 17 will be able to take an exploratory flight in an airplane.

In addition to the Young Eagle rides, there will be demonstrations on the pond by the St. Louis Remote control boat club, a "Cruise" to the balloons, the Tri County Aviation Education Zone, a huge Veterans Reunion recognizing those who have served, inflatables for kids to play on, vendors/crafters, sponsor booths, and other family friendly activities.

For those interested in riding in a hot air balloon, the Rotary Club will be selling chances to win a hot air balloon ride through a ping pong ball drop being held Saturday morning of the event.

Witzel explained the purpose of the Tri County Aviation Zone, stating: "In the Tri County Aviation Zone, which of course is sponsored by Tri County Electric, we will allow children of all ages to learn about flight with the SIU school of aviation flight simulators, a remote control hot air balloon, and other aviation activities to give the children a chance to learn a little bit more about aviation. We will have hot air balloon pilots and aviation students involved, so the children will be able to ask question to further explore their interest in aviation."

To finish out the day on Saturday, Crossroads Community Hospital will partner for an amazing "Survivors" flight. Witzel indicated that the details are still being worked out, but she indicated that it will be a flight that no one will want to miss.

On Sunday morning, the pilots will once again fly the balloons from the airport.

Witzel said that they are still looking for sponsors.

She said, "We have Flight Line sponsorship's, Hot Air sponsorships, and Flying High sponsorships available. Please contact myself or Sheila at the airport for additional details."

Witzel encouraged people to check out the Balloons Over Mt. Vernon website and their Facebook page for Balloons Over Mt. Vernon for additional information and updates as they evolve.

The net proceeds of the event will benefit the United Way as well as a couple of other community minded groups.

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