

# Salute to Freedom to feature fireworks, fun, and food

*Annual Independence Day event set for July 4 at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport*

**BY EMILY ROTH**

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — The Annual Salute to Freedom at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport will be held on July 4 with gates opening at 5 p.m. and a shuttle from the parking area.

"This is either year 29 or year 30.

... Regardless of whether it's 29 or 30, that's a lot of years," said Airport Director Chris Collins. "It's pretty exciting."

According to the Mt. Vernon Convention and Visitors Bureau, a variety of food concessions will be available as well as a Kid Zone with inflatables, laser tag and other various activities. Rainbow D. Clown will do a show on the stage at 6 p.m. followed by a performance by folk group Bringin' It Back at 7 p.m. Winners from the Little Miss and Mister 4th of July Pageant held on July 3 will be announced around 8:40 p.m.

and the fireworks will kick off at dusk.

"The Salute to Freedom was started by the Mt. Vernon Jaycees many years ago and I was on that committee..." said Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Board of Commissioners Chairman Mike Ancona. "I might add that we hand-lit the first fireworks that were out there. Nobody knows this. This whole thing was born on the porch of the old house where the Jaycees had their meetings underneath the water tower."

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Sentinel File Photo

**DRAWING A CROWD** — Area residents began to gather after gates opened at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport last year for the Salute to Freedom. The crowd only grew larger as time passed. This year gates open at 5 p.m. with fireworks expected at dusk.

## Salute:

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Ancona indicated that the Salute to Freedom began after a period in which Mt. Vernon had no Independence Day fireworks display.

"We all decided that it was a shame," he continued. "What we were reflecting on was the time when fireworks were shot off at City Park. Me being the age that I am, I remembered seeing those fireworks from my yard over

on Waltonville Road. Occasionally we would come over to the park when they were shot off. Everybody asked 'Why did we quit doing that?' ... We thought that we were going to revitalize Fourth of July fireworks. That was how it began."

To Ancona, the Salute to Freedom is a historic event and to see the event still brought to life every year resonates with him. Now the fireworks are deployed electronically rather than by hand.

Illinois Highway 15 will close down at 8:30 p.m. for

the duration of the fireworks show. The Mt. Vernon Police Department will be on hand to help with traffic flow, and the Mt. Vernon Fire Department will be present to help maintain a safe and fun event for families.

"We are very happy to put this event on each year for the residents of Mt. Vernon and surrounding areas," Angela Schrum, director of tourism commented. "Each year we see great crowds of family and friends come out to enjoy the festivities and the fireworks."

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