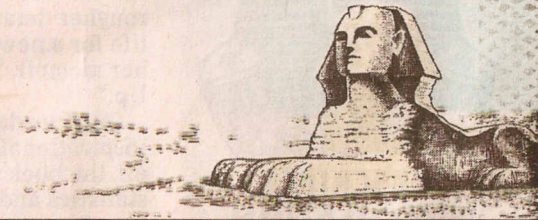
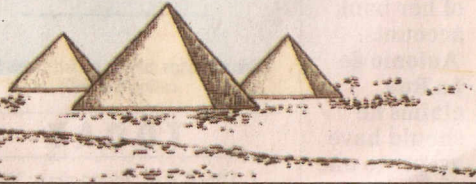


# MT. VERNON Sentinel



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## PATRIOTIC DAY



Amber Shafer of Eldorado puts the finishing touches on her square as a part of the chalk art competition held at the Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon on Thursday. The event drew thousands from the region and included children's activities such as the competition. Shafer won the prize for the best use of the Fourth of July theme.

# Salute to Freedom sees success

*Annual fireworks display draws thousands of area residents*

**BY LAUREN P. DUNCAN**  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — Temperatures in the 70s and 80s, a light breeze, no rain and the subsiding of wet streets from earlier in the week all came together to set the perfect scene for Mt. Vernon's annual Fourth of July celebration.

The annual Salute to Freedom was held Thursday evening at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport grounds, drawing residents from throughout the region to see an elaborate fireworks display on Independence Day.

Bonnie Jerdon, Mt. Vernon Convention and Visitor's Bureau executive director, said thousands came out for this year's event, as at 8:30 p.m. officials were already directing drivers to overflow parking, meaning there were at least 5,000 in attendance.

Mt. Vernon Mayor Mary Jane Chelsey thanked the Mt. Vernon Fire Department and Mt. Vernon Police Department for their assistance in putting on the event, as well as the Mt. Vernon City Council.

"This is one of Mt. Vernon's highly successful events," she said.

The gates for the Salute to Freedom opened at 5 p.m. and a number of activities were held throughout the evening, including a chalk art contest hosted by the city for the first time this



Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

**NOTHING BUT BREEZE** — Attendees to the Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon on Thursday take a look at a hot air balloon as operators demonstrate firing it up. The balloon as well as an Air Evac helicopter were a few of the aircraft that took to the sky before the fireworks display began at 9 p.m.



Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

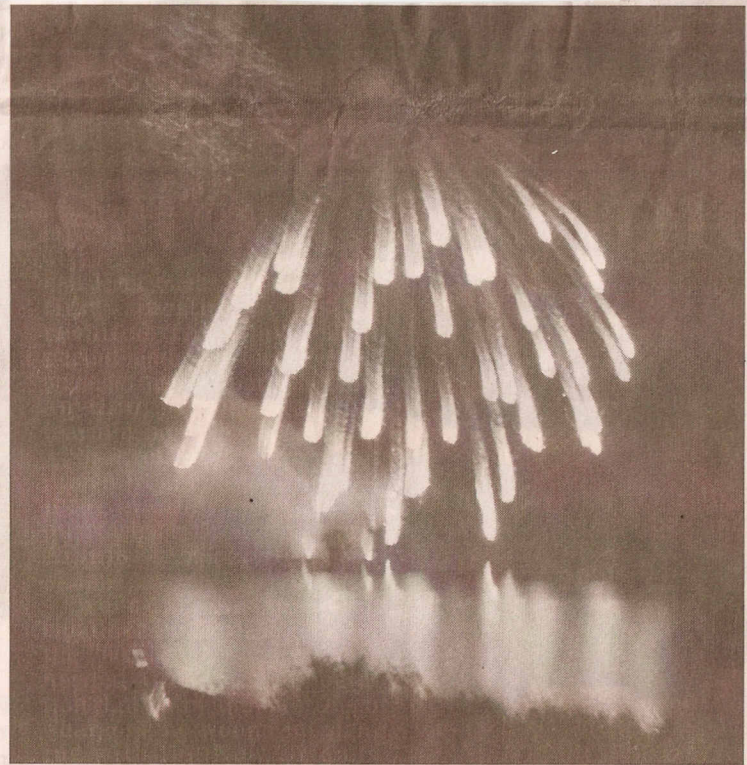
**GRAND FINALE** — Attendees to the Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon look on during the grand finale of the 22-minute long fireworks presentation. Thursday's event drew thousands from the area, as good weather and cooler July 4 temperatures set the scene for the Independence Day evening.



Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

**LIGHTING UP THE SKY** — Attendees to the annual Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon on Thursday sit atop the hill at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport in looking on at the encore of the fireworks display. The 22-minute long display was put on by Central States Fireworks and thousands came out to see it.

**LIGHTS OVER THE LAKE** — Fireworks fall over the lake during the annual Salute to Freedom held at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport on Thursday evening. More than 5,000 attendees came out to see the 22-minute long fireworks presentation.



Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

## Salute:

*Continued From Page 1A*

year, where colors from the city's logo and patriotic designs were awarded. Those who were named winners include Shay Ulrich, Aubrianna and Alexis Braddy, Devon Pigg, Morgan Klein, Jason Sims, and the most creative design went to Beth

Hammond, the best use of a Fourth of July theme went to Amber Shafer, and the grand prize went to Brooklyn Bernard.

Other activities included an array of food choices, music throughout the evening, vendors, and games for children.

The event kicked off during the afternoon with the second annual America's Cutest Baby Contest and Little Miss Illinois Fourth of July Contest. At these contests, sever-

al children were crowned, and were given the opportunity to help countdown to the launch of the fireworks at 9 p.m.

The event concluded with the fireworks display, which was put on again this year by Central States Fireworks. The 22-minute long aerial presentation had attendees oohing, awing and craning their necks before visitors made their ways to their cars to line out of the airport grounds.

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Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

**GETTING ARTSY — Alexis Braddy, 15, LEFT, draws a purple heart as her 7-year-old sister, Aubrianna Braddy, finishes the American flag and their mother, Roberta Braddy, looks on. The three came from Walnut Hill to see the fireworks at the annual Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon and participated in the chalk art drawing competition, and the girls were selected among the winners of the contest.**



Sentinel Photo/LAUREN P. DUNCAN

**GETTING ARTSY** — Alexis Braddy, 15, LEFT, draws a purple heart as her 7-year-old sister, Aubrianna Braddy, finishes the American flag and their mother, Roberta Braddy, looks on. The three came from Walnut Hill to see the fireworks at the annual Salute to Freedom in Mt. Vernon and participated in the chalk art drawing competition, and the girls were selected among the winners of the contest.