

Salute to Freedom attracts diverse crowd

Event was more than fireworks as area residents packed the airport grounds in celebration

BY EMILY ROTH

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — Patriotism was in full swing at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport on Friday, as many attended the annual Salute to Freedom for the food, festivities and fireworks.

Though the gates opened at 5:30 p.m., area vendors arrived hours early to set up their wares. Foods ranged from pulled pork, to kettle corn, to funnel cakes and corn dogs. Each vendor had their own style of bringing fair food to Jefferson County, including Jason and Murisa Anderson of Anderson's Kettle Corn.

In honor of the holiday, the Andersons made red, white and blue kettle corn with blue raspberry and cherry flavoring. According to Murisa Anderson, the patriotic corn is a high seller on Independence Day.

The patriotic corn was started last year specifically for the Salute to Freedom. "They go after the red, white and blue because it's the Fourth of July," she said. "We were set up since one and we'll be here until the it's done. It gets busier as it gets closer to time for the fireworks to start. It's been pretty steady all day long."

Though the Andersons did not see the fireworks last year due to having a busy stand, they hoped to catch a glimpse the second time around. "We were too busy, but hopefully we'll see a few of them anyway," finished Anderson.



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DRAWING A CROWD — Area residents began to gather after gates opened at the airport and the crowd at the Salute to Freedom only grew larger on Friday as time passed.



TAKING ORDERS — Sabrina Hosseton, LEFT, and Gret Morrison, RIGHT, take an order inside the Blowin' Smoke vendor stand during the Salute to Freedom. Alongside Tracy Thomas, all three worked to provide barbecue to raise funds for the Woodlawn Gold Rush.

Blowin' Smoke BBQ of Woodlawn provided a staple of summer — barbecue, complete with a smoker behind their stand. The stand acts as a fundraiser for Woodlawn's Gold Rush Days on Sept. 20. This is their second year at the Salute to Freedom.

"Oh, the people love the pulled pork because the Hosselttons are awesome," said Gret Morrison, one of three people working inside the stand. "The Hosselttons are Blowin' Smoke and this is a fundraiser for us."

"People seem to love it," said David Tindall, who is affiliated with Gold Rush. "Roger and Sabrina Hosseltton run this." They make the basic pulled pork and from that they'll do barbecue nachos which is nacho chips with pulled pork barbecue and nacho cheese over that and barbecue sauce. It's just nuts. They've got something now that they call a Buck Burger which is a cheeseburger; they'll throw more pulled pork over it and nacho cheese. It's messy and gooey, but it's good."

Many from Jefferson County and around the region gathered early to enjoy the music provided by Midwest Sound and Light, who provided a DJ and music. Some set up lawn chairs to relax by the lake while others walked through the airport grounds.

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PLAYTIME IN THE SUN — Audrey Morrison and Tyler Eckleberry, FAR LEFT AND FAR RIGHT, have a bubble gun fight as Ellie Bolyard and Joslin Gibson, INSIDE LEFT AND RIGHT, try on hats at one of the many vendor stands at Mt. Vernon's Salute to Freedom on Friday.

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COLORS OF THE FLAG — Murisa Anderson of Anderson's Kettle Corn scoops her tri-colored popcorn into a bag. The red, white and blue corn was made just for the Salute to Freedom last year and returns once again.

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Rainbow the Clown performed a magic show around 8 p.m. and the fireworks show, provided by Central States Fireworks, began at approximately 9 p.m. and lasted an estimated 22 min-

utes.

City, county and Illinois State Police were on hand to direct traffic and parking as well as provide any crowd control as needed. Litton Ambulance and the Mt. Vernon Fire Department were also on standby in the event of an emergency as well as the Fire Department additionally on standby with the pyrotechnic crew.

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CHASE THEM DOWN — This little guy proved to be an adept bubble hunter, chasing down bubbles and popping them with his hands as they were blown. Children were given room to play and dance across the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport grounds.