

Salute to Freedom honors and entertains

The annual Fourth of July celebration lights up the sky with fireworks

BY GREG PETERSON
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MT. VERNON — Thousands of Jefferson County residents and visitors gathered at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport for Salute to Freedom Saturday.

The annual Fourth of July event celebrates the country's birthday with an evening of food, music, and events, as well as a nighttime show of dazzling fireworks.

Mt. Vernon Tourism Director Bonnie Jerdon said this year's event marks the 28th Annual Salute to Freedom at the airport.

"We try to keep it as a traditional family event," stated Jerdon. She said that the city of Mt. Vernon pays for the fireworks and the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport hosts the show.

Jerdon commented, "It's always a nice show." She said that the airport location was an ideal spot for a fireworks show.

"This is a perfect location. The view couldn't be better," stated Jerdon. She said, "The ground slopes down towards the water and it makes a nice, almost an amphitheater feel to it." She added that having the fireworks across from the lake makes the event more safe because the audience is removed from where the fireworks are being shot.

Mayor Mary Jane Chesley commented that Salute to Freedom is not only a great experience for residents, but also visitors from out of town. She said that she met a family living in Evansville, Ind. who came back to Mt. Vernon for the fireworks.

Chesley stated, "It's a wonderful opportunity to salute our veterans, and to see families having fun together and sharing in entertainment with food and good fun."

Scott Clark of Central States Fireworks, Inc. explained the technical side of the amazing firework display.

According to Clark, the Salute to Freedom show consists of roughly a 460 shot show. The grand finale is about 360 shots. The show consists of shells between three and 10 inches in diameter and a variety of colors of each size.

The firework show lasts about 23 minutes, estimated Clark. He informed that the show is choreographed to music. He said that, though the color variances are not



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a deliberate part of the choreography, they make sure the colors are done in a variety.

Clark said that a firework show of that magnitude takes a lot of preparation and work. He stated, "We run a four man crew. It's about a 10-hour

day for us, so to set a show up of this size is roughly 30 to 40 man-hours."

The Salute to Freedom firework show, according to Clark, is a \$20,000 show. He said, "We shoot shows anywhere from \$3,000 to \$20,000." Clark said that for the Central States Southern Illinois crew, the Salute to Freedom firework show is very big.

"In Southern Illinois, this is one of the bigger shows that there is," stated Clark.

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Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

4TH OF JULY FUN — Rainbow D. Clown makes a balloon airplane while Madison Kilgore and Jeremy Jr. Kilgore watch during Salute to Freedom Saturday at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. In addition to the nighttime fireworks show, the event offered music, food, lazer tag, and a kids play area with inflatables.



Sentinel Photos/GREG PETERSON

SALUTE TO FREEDOM — Many beautiful fireworks were gazed during the Salute to Freedom at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Saturday. The 460-shot fireworks show was choreographed to music and featured a 360-shot finale.