

Balloon event plans unveiled

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MT. VERNON — Kevin and Jennifer Witzel outlined plans for Balloons Over Mt. Vernon on the weekend of the Mt. Vernon Festival during Tuesday's Airport Authority meeting. The Witzels said last year's inaugural event drew over 500 spectators with an expectation of 4,000 to 5,000 this year.

Jennifer Witzel explained there will be tethered balloon rides on Friday night and Saturday morning, a pancake breakfast in conjunction with the United Way of South Central Illinois on Saturday morning and a flight over downtown Mt. Vernon on Saturday evening. There will also be a flight over the city on Saturday morning.

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EVENT

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Last year's event drew about 10 balloons; this year's event will feature 15 balloons.

"Twenty is a good number to work with," Kevin Witzel said. "If you have more than that you have to hire a balloonmeister to coordinate."

"We want to make it bigger and better this year," Jennifer Witzel said. "We want it to grow and turn into a bigger event next year. It's really a community thing. It will draw a lot of local people here."

Kevin Witzel added,

"This has the potential to be a good event like the Airventure race and the USA Expo."

The tethered balloon rides will be offered from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday night at a cost of \$10 each.

Proceeds from the breakfast on Saturday morning will go to the United Way. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$4 for children.

Jennifer Witzel said many businesses affiliated with the United Way will have booths at the event. Wilkey's Restaurant will provide food.

In other business, the Authority approved an agency agreement with IDOT for the taxiway B and E revitalization project. The cost of the project is estimated to be \$415,000 with a local match of \$21,000. The project will re-

pair the angular taxiway leading from the terminal to mid-field and the taxiway at the end of runway 23. The Authority will absorb the costs for a gate near the terminal.

Manager Chris Collins said the project may not get done by the end of the fall season. He anticipated the work could not begin for about six weeks.

"With the feds getting their money later, it's pushing projects into next year," Collins said.

IN OTHER BUSINESS:

■ Approved a one-year lease with Arista Ramsey to rent Suite 131, next to the conference room, to start a beauty shop. Ramsey said she plans to operate the

business from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

■ Gave Collins permission to purchase three additional security cameras and a TV/monitor for the office from Electronic Architects.

■ Approved a Carson and Barnes circus, with shows at 2 and 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 14.

■ And approved the prevailing wage ordinance.

Collins reported the airport had a successful USA Expo this past weekend.

"It's amazing where they're coming from for this. It's becoming something on the aviation national scene. It's the nucleus of something that can grow," he reported.