

Balloons Over Mt. Vernon to arrive at Fall Fest

Event will feature 15 hot air balloons from across the country

BY EMILY ROTH

SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — Balloons Over Mt. Vernon flies in on Oct. 17, 18 and 19 at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport in conjunction with Fall Fest and the theme of Toones, Tunes, and Balloons.

The event will feature tethered balloon rides, a family area, a children's costume parade, a balloon launch and a pancake breakfast at Wilkey's Cafe to benefit the United Way of South Central Illinois.

There will be 15 balloons this year, an increase from last year's 10 balloons. Jennifer Witzel, one of the event organizers along with her husband Kevin hopes that in 2015 there will be 20 balloons, which she estimates is "a good number."

The Witzels are Mt. Vernon hot

air balloon owners.

"We're aviators, not just balloon people," stated Witzel regarding both herself and her husband. "I think it's going to be bigger and better this year."

The balloon glow will take place from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday. During the glow, those in attendance can talk to the balloon pilots as well as take a tethered balloon ride. At the airport will also be the opportunity for Young Eagle airplane rides.

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"This can really grow and turn into a lot next year," said Jennifer, whose husband added, "It's got a lot of potential to become a really good event for the community and especially for the airport."

On Saturday the pancake breakfast will be held from 7 to 10 a.m. at Wilkey's Cafe, a balloon flight over Fall Fest will be at 5 p.m. and tethered balloon rides at the Mt. Vernon football field will be from 4 to 9 p.m. Parking as well as all activities are free except for the pancake breakfast and tether rides.

The breakfast will feature celebrity pancake flippers and contests.

"As many of you know, last year in October we had Balloons Over Mt. Vernon," stated Jennifer Witzel, "and those of you who were out here realized that we had an

unexpected nice thing happen. We were expecting 200 to 300 people and we ended up with close to 4,500 people, which was a nice thing, but we weren't ready for it."

Event organizers are working with the airport as well as local police to accommodate large numbers of people as well as parking.

"This year we are partnering with United Way in conjunction with Fall Fest," continued Witzel, "which is a little bit different than what we had last year, but it's worked out to be a great partnership."

Sponsors for Balloons Over Mt. Vernon include Country Financial, Flo-Gas Propane Service, Rare Chop House, Klein Orthodontics, and Clarke Construction.

Lowery's Pub is sponsoring a special shape from Louisville, Ky., called "The Rocket," shaped like a spaceship.

The Witzels stated that in the 1980s there was a yearly balloon event in Mt. Vernon, which they wish to revive.

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9-11-14



Submitted Photo

TETHER RIDES — "Glory Be" from Fishers, Ind., piloted by Tony Sandlin will provide tether rides for Balloons Over Mt. Vernon. The balloon features a basket with a door on it, allowing easier access for those with physical limitations.



Submitted Photo

SOARING ABOVE — Lowery's Pub will sponsor Balloons Over Mt. Vernon's special shape this year from Louisville, Ky. called "The Rocket." The Rocket will be one of 15 balloons at this year's event.