

# Balloon Glow set for Friday night

*Outdoor event planned from 4 to 7 p.m. at airport*

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MT. VERNON — Balloons Over Mt. Vernon kicks off Friday night with a Balloon Glow set to run from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

During the event, 14 hot-air balloons will be lit up using their burners to create an incredible display for the public.

And while beauty is a key part of the event, it's not the only objective. Organizers also want to give people the chance to get "up close and personal" with the balloons.

"The beauty of it is one piece. The other is people can go and actually talk to the balloonists," said crew chief Jennifer Witzel, one of the event organizers. "We're really inviting people to come and talk to the balloon people (and) ask questions. ... And the pilots enjoy showcasing their sport."

In addition to the glow itself, Friday's gathering will also feature tethered balloon rides from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., which cost \$10 a piece.

Also, there will be a family area, a children's costume parade, crafters, and food vendors. One of the food choices will be gourmet kettle corn.

Furthermore, a clown from Barnum Entertainment will be on hand, as will

**SEE GLOW PAGE 5A**

## GLOW

**FROM PAGE 1A**

members of the 501st Legion, a group of individuals who dress up as Star Wars characters.

The balloons will start to be inflated at 5 p.m. Friday, and the glow will take place when it gets dark, Witzel said.

Throughout the event, people are encouraged to approach the balloonists to ask questions and get a close-up view of the balloons, Witzel said.

"They can actually go up to them," Witzel said.

Organizers say the public should come early to the glow and bring lawn chairs and blankets.

Friday's Balloon Glow is one of three events that make up this year's Balloons Over Mt. Vernon, which is being held in conjunction with the Mt. Vernon Fall Fest.

The other two events take place Saturday. First, a Balloon Launch will be held from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. at the airport.

As part of this activity, several balloons

will be in the air and there will also be a pancake breakfast, tethered balloon rides, and Young Eagle plane rides for kids starting at around 9 a.m.

The final Saturday event will be a Balloon Flight Over Fall Fest starting at 5 p.m. This will feature balloons that will be flown across town right around the time the Fall Fest parade is drawing to a close.

During the flight, tethered balloon rides will once again be offered, this time from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the J.D. Shields Memorial Stadium.

"There'll be three opportunities for folks to ride in the tether balloons," Witzel said. "And we're pretty excited that they're allowing us to come to the football field and do that."

With the tethered rides, people can take a trip up in a balloon that is tied down. The balloon is taken up about 60 feet and then brought down again.

All net proceeds from will benefit the United Way of South Central Illinois. For more information, visit [www.balloonsovermt-vernon.com](http://www.balloonsovermt-vernon.com).

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