

Balloons Over Mt. Vernon this weekend

BY TESA GLASS

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MT. VERNON — This weekend, a full slate of activities are going on, including the Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and Fly-In with the Veterans Reunion.

"The mission of Balloons Over Mt. Vernon and the Fly-In is to promote the general love and education of aviation while giving back to the community, and that is exactly what we plan to do with a weekend full of activities," said Jennifer Witzel, one of the organizers of the event.

Witzel said the weather is

expected to be great for the event and 17 balloons are part of the festivities, with 16 participating in the United Way Balloon Glow on Friday and the special shape, "Sharky."

"Who knew sharks could fly," Witzel joked.

The gates will open Friday at 4 p.m. and the glow will get underway at 6 p.m. During the glow, United Way of South Central Illinois agencies will be spotlighted through family-oriented activity booths.

Tether balloon rides will be available all weekend for \$10. Saturday morning events get

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underway with the YMCA of Jefferson County 5K Run/Walk, Run With The Balloons. Participants will watch the hot air balloons take part in the US Bank Duck Drop. A pancake breakfast will be hosted in the terminal by the United Way with celebrity waiters.

The St. Louis Remote Control Boats will be floating all day at the pond; Young Eagle rides will take place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

Mt. Vernon Rotary will host a ping pong ball drop at 10 a.m. with a chance to win a hot air balloon ride.

"We have the car show on Saturday, Cruise to Balloons, with cars gathering at Times Square Mall and

escorted by the police and fire to the airport where they will set up for the show all day," Witzel said.

Witzel said organizers are also excited about the Tri-County Electric Aviation Education Zone from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. for kids of all ages.

"We've got a walk-through area of a balloon and a walk-through for a cockpit," Witzel said. "Land of Lincoln Americorps will be on hand to do lots of activities with the kids."

The Fly-In and Veterans Reunion portion of the event will include a salute to veterans at 2 p.m., and one of the veterans getting to fly an FM2 Wildcat Navy plane.

A warbirds display is planned with a P51 Mustang, and a WACO biplane offering rides for \$100.

Saturday's events will wrap up with the Crossroads Community Hospital Survivor Flight.

The weekend concludes with a fun flight from the airport.

10-15-15

Balloons Over Mt. Vernon



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One of the hot air balloon pilots, his family and ground crew get ready for a flight Thursday afternoon. Balloons Over Mt. Vernon will be going on this weekend at the airport, with the United Way Balloon Glow tonight at 6 p.m.

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