

Mt. Vernon celebrates America 250

Salute to Freedom carries on despite rainy weather

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MOUNT VERNON — No matter what Mother Nature threw at Mount Vernon Saturday, nothing was going to stop this year's Salute to Freedom.

While the afternoon and evening brought sporadic storms and rain showers, many area residents still turned out for the city's beloved Fourth of July celebration at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

And this year's festivities were made all the more poignant by the fact that they coincided with America 250, the 250th anniversary of America's independence.

This year's Salute to Freedom marked the 40th



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FUN WITH BUBBLES — Erik Dickey of Wayne City pushes his 3-year-old son Emmet in a stroller while Emmet enjoys a bubble machine during Saturday's Salute to Freedom at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

anniversary of one of Southern Illinois' most cherished Independence Day traditions. Although some activities were impacted by the rain, there was still food, music, a Kid

Zone, and a spectacular fireworks display to conclude the evening.

"Mother Nature certainly tested us on the Fourth of July," said Angela Schrum, Tourism

Director for the City of Mount Vernon. "A powerful storm swept through and devastated our Market Days vendor area, forcing

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us to quickly adapt our parking and event plans due to the saturated grounds. Thanks to the incredible teamwork of city crews, airport staff, and the sound and fireworks vendors, we were able to pivot quickly and keep the event moving forward."

Then, Schrum said, the skies cleared and thousands gathered to celebrate the Salute to Freedom and our nation's 250th anniversary.

"Seeing families come together to enjoy great food, Mayor John Lewis' moving remarks, and an incredible fireworks display, was a reminder that even after the storm, our community shines brighter than ever," Schrum said. "We couldn't have asked for a more meaningful way to celebrate America's independence and the



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

DISPLAY OF PATRIOTISM — Mount Vernon celebrated the Fourth of July and America 250 with a dazzling fireworks show at the conclusion of Saturday's Salute to Freedom.

spirit of Mount Vernon."

A FAMILY EVENT

The Mount Vernon celebration drew people from across the area Saturday, including Stephanie Campbell of Keenes, her 4-year-old daughter Kara, and the rest of their family.

"We haven't gone to

anything in years honestly. We thought we would come check this out," Stephanie said of the Fourth of July celebration.

And Stephanie added that the rainy weather did not bother her family.

"No, my other daughter's in here and

she's soaked," she said, laughing.

Also in attendance Saturday were Jessica Simmons of Fairfield and her 4-year-old daughter Emilia Alicea. Jessica said this was their third year coming to Salute to Freedom, and that they love the variety of family-friendly activities that are available.

"Out of the ones we go to, this is what we see and we always come here," Jessica said, later adding of the activities, "There is always something for her (Emilia) to do, and there's always different food."

Another visitor to Saturday's Salute to Freedom was Erik Dickey of Wayne City, his 3-year-old son Emmet, and the rest of their family. Erik said it was his family's first time at the Mount Vernon festival, and that they were enjoying themselves.

MANY ACTIVITIES

Activities that were

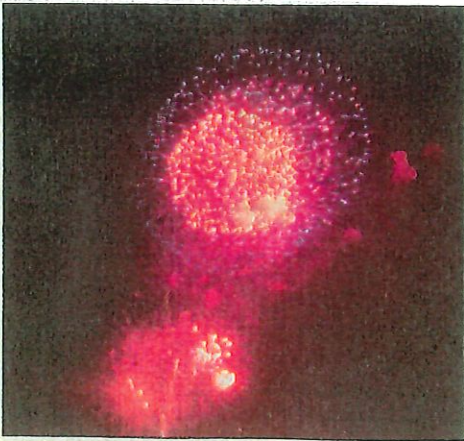
scheduled for Saturday included food trucks; Market Days vendors; music; and a pay-to-play Kid Zone with inflatables, laser tag, and more.

However, some of this schedule was affected by the storm.

The evening finished

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Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

GRAND FINALE — Saturday's Salute to Freedom in Mount Vernon concluded with an awe-inspiring fireworks show.

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with a dazzling fireworks

show at dusk. Just prior to the show, Mayor Lewis delivered his special Independence Day Address celebrating our nation's freedoms and the



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FOUR IN A ROW — Sisters Nola Jacobs, RIGHT, and Amalia Shelton, both of McLeansboro, play a game called "Four in a Row" during Saturday's Salute to Freedom at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

community spirit that has made Salute to Freedom such an enjoyable family tradition.

"As you watch the fireworks tonight, think of

the sacrifices made by many throughout our history that have allowed us to reside in the greatest country on the face of this earth," Lewis said in



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

AN ENJOYABLE DAY — Stephanie Campbell of Keenes poses with her 4-year-old daughter Kara at Saturday's Salute to Freedom in Mount Vernon.

his address. "Tonight, there is much to celebrate and many blessings to be grateful for — but it is just as American to have some fun. Let the

celebration begin."

For more information on Salute to Freedom, visit enjoymtvernon.com or follow Enjoy Mt. Vernon on social media.