

# The News Gazette

## Hegeler tribute taking flight on first night of Balloons Over Vermilion festival

- *Tracy Crane*

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Curt and Kendra Giebler of Kansas hang a handful of balloon spinners Thursday, July 11, 2019, at their display at Vermilion Regional Airport in Danville ahead of the first day of the 2019 Balloons Over Vermilion festival, which begins Friday. The Gieblers travel to hot-air balloon events and other venues all over the country promoting their business, My Wind Stuff, which features huge kites and other wind-related items.

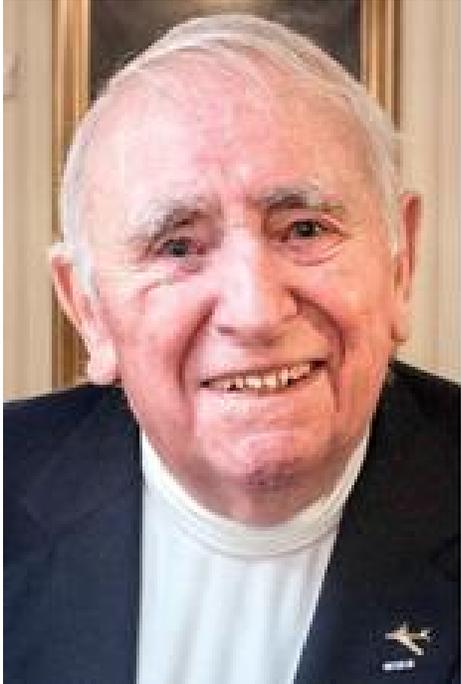
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DANVILLE — Three local airplane pilots are joining in the flyover at tonight's kick-off of the Balloons Over Vermilion hot-air balloon festival in order to help Danville-area pilot Jay Schroeder honor the event's biggest benefactor, Julius W. Hegeler II, who passed away one week ago.



# *A Life* **REMEMBERED**

## **JULIUS W. HEGELER II**

### A Life Remembered | 'There are very few people who leave a footprint that a man like Julius W. Hegeler II leaves'

The millions donated by the lifelong Danville resident and Korean War veteran who made it his mission to help his hometown went to groups that advocated for children, education, the environment, health care, historic preservation, the arts, veterans and people with disabilities.

“I was touched by his philanthropy,” Urbana pilot Tom Frasca said of Hegeler, an Air Force pilot during the Korean War era, Danville native, businessman and long-time philanthropist who sponsored many causes — including the hot-air balloon festival that runs today through Saturday night at the Vermilion Regional Airport north of Danville.

Gates open at 3 p.m. today, and the tribute to Hegeler will be at 5:45 p.m., just before a parade of hot-air balloon pilots at 6 p.m. A balloon flight and glow are scheduled for tonight and Saturday night at the airport.

Hegeler, who was 91, donated the seed money that helped launch this premier event in Vermilion County, which he attended every year.

Tom Frasca said he met Hegeler at an aviation event many years ago, and after Hegeler’s passing last week, he reached out to Schroeder to ask if he would like three more planes from the era of Hegeler’s flying days to join in the flyover.

Flying alongside Schroeder in the skies over the airport tonight will be Frasca, his brother David, and Jud Nogle.

The four planes they'll be flying — which date from the 1940s and '50s — are two Beechcraft T-34 propeller-driven, single-engine, military trainer airplanes and two AT-6 planes, also propeller-driven single-engine trainers.

On the ground, Harold Puzey, a Navy veteran in his 70s, will play the taps bugle call, event Co-Chair Pat O'Shaughnessy said, and the Danville Barbershop Chorus will sing the national anthem as well as the "U.S. Air Force Song."

"It's a perfect venue for the folks in our area to express their gratitude to the Hegeler family and foundation board and to say one last goodbye," said Jim Anderson, the other Balloons Over Vermilion co-chairman.

"He was the heart and soul of this event," Anderson said. "Not only was, but always will be. Julius didn't wait for people to knock on his door. He looked for opportunities, for events and initiatives that would positively impact lives and hopefully make for lifelong memories."

Anderson said Mr. Hegeler was always there for the event's opening ceremonies on Friday nights.

"He spent a lot of hours out here, sometimes against his doctor's advice. □ I like to tell people that this event was the marriage of three great passions of his: aviation, his community and the kids," Anderson said.