

Hoopeston Chronicle

Balloons Over Vermilion organizers honor benefactor's memory

- [By Jordan Crook Chronicle Editor](#)

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Photos by Jordan Crook

This year's Balloons Over Vermilion event was presented in tribute to Julius W. Hegeler II, the event's benefactor who recently passed away.

- Photos by Jordan Crook



Members from American Legion Post 210 present the colors during the opening ceremony of this year's Balloons Over Vermilion celebration Friday.



The Danville Barbershop Chorus performs during the opening ceremony of the Balloons Over Vermilion celebration Friday at Danville Regional Airport.



"Taps" is performed in honor of Julius W. Hegeler II during Friday's Balloons Over Vermilion opening ceremony.

The organizers of the Balloons Over Vermilion 2019 celebration, which took place at Danville Regional Airport this weekend, took time to honor the contributions of one of the events main benefactors during Friday night's opening ceremonies.

Julius W. Hegeler II was a major supporter of the Balloons Over Vermilion celebration through his foundation, the Julius W. Hegeler II Foundation. Hegeler recently passed away at age 91.

"Tonight we pause as a community to honor the memory of our dear friend, Julius W. Hegeler II," Emcee Mike Hulvey said. "Through his generosity and leadership, not only has this event gained its footing and drive, examples of his vision and support will impact our community for decades to come."

Hulvey discussed Hegeler's past, including his service in the U.S. Air Force as a fighter pilot during the Korean War. Hegeler received the Distinguished Flying Cross, America's oldest military aviation award.

After returning to Danville, Hegeler grew a local business into a major employer in the community, at one point employing more than 1,000 people. In retirement, Hulvey said, Hegeler focused on building up the community through donations from his foundation.

Hegeler became the title sponsor for the Balloons Over Vermilion celebration, but Hulvey said he was a true partner in the event's planning and execution each year.

"He enjoyed interacting with the pilots, the sponsors, the volunteers, but what he enjoyed most of all were the kids," Hulvey said. "When Jim Anderson and Pat O'Shaughnessy would talk to Julius about the event, he would always want to know one thing: what was new at the Kids Zone? At this event, Julius was just one of the kids."

Hulvey said Hegeler lived up to the Rotary motto of "Service Above Self."