

Hoopeston Chronicle

Balloons Over Vermilion celebrates record year

Jordan Crook

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Photo by Jordan Crook

Balloons Over Vermilion pilots take an aerial tour of Vermilion County during this year's Balloons Over Vermilion celebration.

Photo by Jordan Crook

Balloons Over Vermilion would like to thank the over 600 sponsors and volunteers who made the 2019 festival a record-breaking success.

Combined Friday and Saturday attendance exceeded 24,000, marking a twenty percent increase from inaugural year 2016. Over 11,000 children joined us for the two-day event, proving once again that Balloons Over Vermilion is all about the kids. All four scheduled balloon launches had lift offs, with beautiful Friday and Saturday morning community flights thrilling thousands throughout Danville and Vermilion County, and mass ascensions from the airport on Friday and Saturday evenings adding to the excitement. The spectacular evening glows had perfect conditions to allow kids of all ages to enter the field and interact with over 30 giant illuminated hot air balloons and their pilots as they lit up the night skies, followed by beautifully synchronized, choreographed laser shows.

Friday's events were dedicated to the memory of Julius W. Hegeler II, title sponsor of Balloons Over Vermilion since its inception, who passed away within the week before gates opened for the 2019 festival. With family and close friends in attendance, opening ceremonies celebrated his extraordinary life and paid tribute to his military career, his love of kids and our community, and the huge impact his generosity has created for both present and future generations.

Every year Balloons Over Vermilion adds something new and listens to feedback on things which can be improved. "Touch A Truck" in Kids Zone on Friday evening was wildly successful, allowing visitors to get up close to all kinds of heavy equipment including tractors, firetrucks and even take a 360-degree spin in an Ameren lift truck. A third tethered balloon was added and more people experienced what it's like to fly in a hot air balloon. Parking and traffic patterns were adjusted to accommodate the record-breaking number of vehicles at the airport and shuttle bus patrons. At the end of both evenings traffic routes were reversed to accommodate convenient, timely and efficient exiting strategies, offering a better visiting experience for all our guests.

Mark your calendars now for Balloons Over Vermilion 2020 July 10-11 at the Vermilion Regional Airport.