



## Balloons Over Vermilion Taking Over Festival of Trees

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After 23 years as one of the main fundraisers for OSF Sacred Heart Medical Center, Danville's Festival of Trees will be put on by another organization, but still dedicated to raising money for medical needs.

Pat O'Shaughnessy, who is part of the board of Balloons Over Vermilion, tells VermilionCountyFirst.com that the group has acquired the annual festival, which is normally held at the David S. Palmer Arena in November. He says that the not-for-profit group will now be running both of the city's premier family- and community-minded events.

The Festival of Trees started in 1997 by what was then United Samaritans Medical Center as a way to raise money for community outreach programs and special health care initiatives. O'Shaughnessy, who is a past chair of the Festival of Trees, says it did not fit into OSF's fundraising model, and so the hospital foundation decided to hand over control to Balloons Over Vermilion.

**"It's a wonderful continuation of an event that's been extremely successful in donating funds back to the community for the past 23 years, and we hope to continue that tradition of providing great family entertainment, while at the same time returning funds to the community,"** he explains.

O'Shaughnessy says that he and the other Balloons Over Vermilion organizers will still be providing money to the hospital for community medical activities. Part of this year's funds will be given to OSF's Bobette Steeley Hegeler Cancer Care Center, which O'Shaughnessy says is about to undergo a remodeling.

Organizers hope to be able to hold both the balloon festival this summer and the Festival of Trees this year if capacity restrictions due to COVID-19 are lifted. Both events were canceled last year due to the pandemic.

