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FEATURED

Balloons Over Vermilion community events start to ramp up

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Balloons Over Vermilion at the Vermilion Regional Airport .

Joyce Seay-Knoblach

As the July 14 and 15 festival at the Vermilion Regional Airport quickly approaches the surrounding communities continue to welcome hot air balloons to their events.

In the northern part of the county, Rossville will kick off its Fourth of July festivities on Sunday, July 2 in Christman Park. Balloonists Larry and Sheelagh Owen will bring their colorful pirate-themed balloon "The Jolly Rollo" to the park at 7:30 p.m. to display and inflate weather permitting. The special balloon appearance is sponsored by Anthem Chevrolet of Hoopston, County Board member Darren Duncan and Rick and Donna White of White Electric. Raffle tickets for a balloon ride for two at a later date will be on sale for \$5. The money raised will benefit the annual Rossville Street Dance in August. On July 4th volunteer firefighters will continue the celebration by turning the hill in Christman Park into a giant waterslide from 10 - 4 for kids of all ages. The American Legion will have food for sale and local fundraising groups will be staffing concession stands.

Oakwood's celebration on July 4th starts with a fireman's breakfast at the fire house followed by their annual 4th of July parade at 11:00 am. Food vendors and the band "Bolero" will be in Oakwood Park at 5:30 pm where an emergency transport helicopter will be flying onto the grounds. Pilot Brock Gale and his brightly colored checkerboard balloon, "Hello, Sweetie" will join the festivities around 6:45 pm to allow people to get up close and ask questions about ballooning and Balloons Over Vermilion. Fireworks will follow at dusk. The balloon appearance is being sponsored by Todd's Auto Body.

What can make the great American pastime even better? Having colorful, giant hot air balloons glide over the infield to toss out the first pitch. Be at Danville Stadium on Saturday, July 8th, when a group of local balloonists will provide a "sneak peek" of the fun and excitement ahead at Balloons Over Vermilion. Pilots will fly over the stadium, giving spectators the thrill of watching hot air balloons fill the sky, just before the start of the scheduled Danville Dans baseball game at historic Danville Stadium.

The Danville Boat Club will host its annual Splash and Dash on Thursday, July 13. Ten balloonists and their gorgeous air craft will compete to hit a target on a pontoon boat on Lake Vermilion in front of the Danville Boat Club. Occasionally the pilots will skim the surface of the lake with their baskets to help navigate the balloon and vie for a better angle toward the target. Plus other balloonists who arrive early for BOV will fly for fun. Everyone is welcome to watch from the grounds and the banks at the Boat Club from 5-9 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person with kids 12 and under free. They will have food for sale and a cash bar will be available.

On July 14 you will want to rise and shine early to get a glimpse of a morning community balloon flight. Pilots will be doing what they love best, flying and getting to know the area from the air as they prepare for the main event starting at 3 p.m. that afternoon.

Full event details and schedule available online at balloonsoververmilion.com.