



# *Parish of Ascension*

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

KENNY MATASSA  
Parish President

## **Parish Readies for Lift Off of 2016 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival Sept. 23-24**

**Contact: Lester Kenyon (225) 450-1138; E-mail: [lkenyon@apgov.us](mailto:lkenyon@apgov.us)  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 25, 2016**

GONZALES – Parish President Kenny Matassa and the Ascension Festivals and Cultural Council, Inc. announced this week all systems are go for lift off of the 2016 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center on Sept. 23-24.

Each night after a day of festival attractions, more than 30 hot air balloons and three special shape balloons will light up the September sky at the expo center's large green space providing the young, and young at heart, visual sensations followed by majestic fireworks shows.

“Here we are, right around the corner from another highly anticipated Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival,” said President Matassa. “And again the balloon committee has put together a great lineup of live music, entertainment, food and many attractions for the festival-goer of all ages.”

Festival admission each day is \$5 for ages 13-plus, and free for children 12 and under. Organizers are encouraging patrons to bring their own lawn chairs. Ice chests, pets, bicycles, weapons, illegal substances and personal motorized vehicles are prohibited. Bags, backpacks, strollers and wagons may be subject to security checks for your safety.

On Friday, Sept. 23 gates will open at 4 p.m. and close at 10 p.m. Gates will reopen Saturday at noon and close at 10 p.m.

Along with the balloon glows, tethered rides will be offered pending safe weather conditions. Balloon officials are reminding all patrons that windy conditions may warrant suspension of both.

Carnival rides will open on Friday from 4 p.m. till 10 p.m. and on Saturday from noon till 10 p.m. Ride bracelets will be available for \$25 on Friday from 5 p.m. till 10 p.m., and \$25 from noon till 10 p.m. on Saturday.

This year, the Children's Village will feature face painting, fingerprinting, a fire safety house, a magician and stilt walker. Kids will also get to pet animals at the Petting Zoo in the village.

Flight Operations Chief Robert Ambeau said hot air balloon tethered rides will be available for \$20 per adult (13 and over) and \$10 for children (12 and under).

Ambeau said this year's event will also include a Balloon Museum display located in the air-conditioned 4-H Building conference rooms/lobby.

Powered Parachute Displays/Flights will take place at the green space field on Saturday. The display will be from noon till 4 p.m. followed by flights from 5 p.m. till 6:30 p.m.

A new feature this year is the addition of Kewl Kites which are extra-large kites in exciting and amazing shapes. Kewl Kites will fly on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

Live blues, and rhythm and blues music will grace the Mockler stage both nights. Friday night, Louisiana Music Hall of Fame alum and multiple-Grammy nominated artist Kenny Neal and the Neal Family Band will play an all evening performance on Friday from 5 p.m. till 10 p.m.

On Saturday blues rock power trio Don Berry and Rockin' Horse will kick off the day's music at 4 p.m., followed by regional favorites Kenny Acosta and the House Reckers at 6 p.m.

Saturday's headliner, The Chris Duarte Group from Austin, Texas, will take to the stage from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. Duarte won "Best New Talent" in Guitar Player Magazine's 1995 Reader's Poll. He also finished fourth in the magazine's "Best Blues Guitarist" category that year behind legends Eric Clapton, Buddy Guy and B.B. King.

This year the Barbecue Competition will be open to all teams. It will take place on Saturday in Barn 7 from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. Entry forms are available on the links below. Rodney Dupuy, of Cajun Livin' and Cookin' television show is organizing the barbecue competition, along with local businessman/realtor and volunteer activist Ken Firmin.

The Classic Car Show will again feature the finest motor vehicles from the regional area. The show will be held in the air conditioned 4-H Building on Saturday from 9:30 a.m. till 4 p.m. Entry forms are available on the links below. Ascension Parish Assessor Mert Smiley, himself a car and motorcycle enthusiast, is chairing this year's car show.

Steinhauer Productions will hold their Arts and Crafts Show in the Trademart Building on both days of the festival.

For more information about the 2016 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival and entry forms, visit <http://ascensionballooning.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/ascensionhotairballoonfestival>.

Organizers said the website's event schedule is being confirmed and will be up shortly.

For additional information you may call Martin McConnell at (225) 450-1035.



PICTURE CUTLINE 1 – Claw’D the Crazy Crab strode across the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center green space during last year’s Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival. Festival organizers said this year’s event will include three special shape balloons and more than 30 hot air balloons.



PICTURE CUTLINE 2 – Families enjoyed the numerous carnival rides at last year’s Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival. The 2016 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival is set for Sept. 23 and 24 at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center.