



Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ
Parish President

Officials Announce Launch of 2014 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 11, 2014**

GONZALES – Ascension Parish President Tommy Martinez, the Ascension Parish Council, along with the Ascension Festivals and Cultural Council, Inc. announced today schedules are complete for the 2014 Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival to be held on Friday, Sept. 26 and Saturday, Sept. 27 at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center.

Admission is \$2.00 for adults and free for children age 12 and under on each day. Organizers encourage festival goers to bring their own chairs. Ice chests and pets are prohibited.

“After a lot of detailed planning, we are extremely excited that this, our third balloon festival, will again continue to be Ascension Parish’s signature event,” said Parish President Martinez.

Martin McConnell, sales and marketing manager with Lamar-Dixon Expo Center, and chairman of the Ascension Festivals and Cultural Council, Inc., a Louisiana non-profit corporation, said this year’s festival will have more family oriented attractions including a carnival.

“Early on it was decided that we would continue with the balloon glows and fireworks at night, but also focus on events during the day that families would enjoy as well,” McConnell said. “We decided to make this a balloon festival with an emphasis on ‘festival.’”

More than 30 balloons from across the country have signed up for this year's event, McConnell said. He said special shape balloons including Pepe LePew and the Purple People Eater will grace the sky each evening during the balloon glows.

Friday's events kick off at 5 a.m. with a media morning flight at the fairgrounds at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center.

Gates open to the public on Friday at 4 p.m. just as the smell of food cooking by food vendors permeates the air. Along with the food, live music will crank up featuring rhythm and blues music by Baton Rouge performer Don Berry and his band. Blues ace Jonathon "Boogie" Long and the Blues Revolution will take the stage at 6:30 p.m.

Hot Air Balloon Tethered Rides will be available for \$20 per adult and \$10 per child 12 and under.

Over by the Children's Village, carnival rides will be available by ticket purchase while an arts and crafts show will take place next door in the Trade Mart Building on both days.

Special shape balloons will begin inflating at 6:30 p.m. followed by the balloon glow at 7 p.m.

Fireworks will begin promptly at 8:30 p.m. followed by continued live blues music until closing at 10 p.m.

Gates will open to the public on Saturday at 10 a.m.

Barbecue pits will fire up at 8 a.m. signaling the start of the "Battle of the Badges" Barbecue Competition. Barbecue teams made up of police and fire departments, along with emergency responders will compete for bragging rights and trophies with the final decisions concluding at 5 p.m.

Balloonists will launch from several areas across the eastern part of Ascension Parish at 7 a.m.

"We wanted to make sure the airborne balloons were getting maximum visibility by parish residents," McConnell said.

McConnell said the target area has yet to be determined but will be located in the central part of the parish.

This year, Play Dirty Adventure has teamed up with the Ascension Hot Air Balloon Festival by bringing their exciting event to the Lamar-Dixon grounds beginning at 9 a.m. and concluding at 4 p.m. Event organizers said participants will be challenged with “20 wild obstacles” before crossing the finish line.

There will be a 3-mile course for ages 14 and up while there will be a 1-mile Mini-Muck for kids ages 6-13.

Organizers said participants will be challenged by the Balloon Climb, Giant Mud Pit, Cargo Net Climb, Fox Hole Pond and Tunnel Slosh to name a few. For more information on how to register, visit <http://playdirtyadventure.com/>.

Carnival rides and other attractions including rock climbing and a hamster ball will be open at 10 a.m. along with the Children’s Village. Carnival rides will require ticket purchases while rock climbing and the hamster ball will require a \$5 admission each.

The Children’s Village will have face painting and a petting zoo, McConnell said.

The Gonzales Police Department will offer finger printing and DNA testing for children at the Children’s Village while the Gonzales Fire Department will have a Fire Safety House set up, both from 10 a.m. till 2 p.m.

The 4-H Building next to the fairgrounds will house a Classic Car Show from 11 a.m. till 3 p.m. Contestants will be competing for trophies.

A powered parachute display will begin at noon, McConnell said.

Live blues music will begin at 1 p.m. with Baton Rouge bluesman Elvin Killerbee and his band, followed by Ryan Patterson and Red Headed Stepchild at 4 p.m. Headliner Chris LeBlanc will take the stage at 6:30 p.m. and blues-rock the grounds until 7 p.m. for the start of the balloon glow.

Fireworks will start at 8:30 p.m. followed by a blues jam from the performers until the festival closes at 10 p.m.

“A lot of work was done behind the scenes to make sure this festival lives up to its reputation of being a family oriented premier event in Ascension Parish,” McConnell

said. “Now, we look forward to bringing in multitudes of people from across the parish, state and southern region for a great time here at the Lamar-Dixon Expo Center.”

For more information and event scheduling, visit <http://www.ascensionballooning.com/>.



CUTLINE- Balloons are shown offering tethered rides during last year’s balloon festival held at Lamar-Dixon Expo Center.

