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## Ballooning at the Midfirst Ohio Challenge

By Eric Robinette  
Staff Writer

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

For most of the Ohio Challenges, visitors have been able only to look up at the balloons. This year, they will be able to look down from them.

While they're looking down, they may notice the Midfirst Ohio Challenge has a lot more than just balloons. Here's what the festival offers Friday, July 16, through Sunday.

### Balloons

The main event is still the brightly colored bags of hot air, and visitors can go up in one. The tethered flights each day will be 5-minute "hops" that ascend 50 to 80 feet. A balloon can accommodate four people, depending on weight. Tethered flights will cost \$10 for ages 13 and up, and \$5 for ages 12 and under.

The balloons will engage in their usual competitions, and there will be balloon glows today and Saturday, and visitors can walk in balloons on Saturday and Sunday. Saturday and Sunday will also offer various "balloon schools" taught by pilots and their chase crews.

All balloon flights are weather-permitting. Even in clear weather, high winds can ground the balloons. "If the tops of the trees are swaying, the balloons don't fly," said Ann Mort, the publicity chair for the event.

### Skydivers

When the balloonists aren't going up, the skydivers are coming down. Team Fastrax returns with their colorful plummets to the earth. At least once a day, the team will dive with a 7,500-square-foot flag. At 9:45 p.m., Saturday, the team will dive with pyrotechnics. The skydivers have looser weather restrictions than the balloons.

### how to go

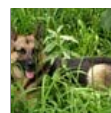
What: The Midfirst Ohio Challenge Hot Air Balloon Festival

When: 4 to 10:30 p.m. today, Noon to 10:30 p.m. Saturday and Noon to 8 p.m. Sunday.




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2008 pets



Football: local scrimmages



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Where: Smith Park, at Tytus Avenue and Verity Parkway, Middletown

Cost: \$2 adult walk-in admission, children under 13 free. For those who drive, the parking fee is \$5 per vehicle, with no walk-in fee. RVs \$20 overnight.

INFO: [www.midfirstohiochallenge.com](http://www.midfirstohiochallenge.com), (513) 705-1770

**Entertainment**

The entertainment roster has been expanded this year to include a mix of local, regional and national acts. Today's opening ceremonies include the United Voices of Middletown choir, and singer Jerry Hughes, formerly of the country band Yankee Gray. Johnny B. and the Gravediggers play tonight, as do Dangerous Jim and the Slims, a party band with three horns.

Saturday's roster includes a showcase of second generation musicians, the sons of well known local musicians like Brian Humanic and Bob Bauer. Beowulf, a classic rock band from Middletown will play, as will the Dave Cousino trio and Howard and the White Boys, a blues band from Chicago.

Sunday's acts are The Rubles, a 60's band playing in the style of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones; The Lindon Davis Group, a jam band like the Allman Brothers; and Parrots of the Caribbean, a Jimmy Buffet tribute band.

**Other stuff**

Constants throughout the weekend will include various food, arts and crafts vendors, a roaming magician, an Indian Village, the Kids Discovery Center and carnival rides,

The Ohio Challenge also shows off rides that are earthbound, via a Sunday car show. Registration will be from 10 a.m. to noon, costing \$4. The show runs from noon to 4 p.m. and will feature awards and door prizes. Also on Sunday is watery entertainment in the form of a duck race at 3 p.m.

**Ohio Challenge tips**

Organizers of the Ohio Challenge offer these tips for the best experience at the festival.

- Arrive early and stay late. Since many people want to watch the evening launches, they tend to enter the gates all at once. Organizers suggest guests arrive at mid-afternoon and stay through the evening to avoid bottlenecks.
- On Saturday and Sunday mornings, the grounds will be open for the balloon competition. The American Legion will sell breakfast foods.
- At home, residents can encourage visitors to land or take off by spreading a common bedsheet on the ground in a space clear of wires or trees.
- Do not "chase" balloons. This has been known to lead to traffic accidents.
- If a balloon lands near you, keep a safe distance until the crew has secured the balloon and the basket. Do not follow a balloon onto private property.

**SCHEDULE:**

Friday

4 p.m. — Park Open

5:30-7:00 — Johnny B and The Gravediggers

**Videos**

New KI Ride: view from front seat 01:29

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