

Celebrating freedom



RECORDER STAFF/MATT BURKHARTT

The fireworks display at the Greenfield Independence Day fireworks celebration at Beacon Field Saturday.

Annual fireworks event gives chance to spend time with family, be thankful

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GREENFIELD — The first three fireworks zipped into the darkening sky as the band played the national anthem, a fitting start to a half-hour show accompanied by “wows” and “oohs” from captivated spectators.

Each rocket launched into the cool night air with a bawhoomp sound, leaving wisps of smoke billowing up from beside Poet’s Seat Tower, which is topped by an American flag. Each exploded with a pop,

lighting up the night sky and field below.

As the explosions came closer together and covered more of the sky, signaling the show’s finale, spectators cheered, whistled and applauded and children uttered excited squeals. The blasts were often so powerful they could be felt.

Thousands of people turned out from across the Pioneer Valley for Greenfield’s annual Independence Day fireworks, which began at 9:30 p.m. after hours of festivities at Beacon Field. At around 7 p.m., Christy Moore, director of the Greenfield Recreation Department, took the stage to

present At-Large Town Councilor Penny Ricketts with the Fortin Family 2016 Volunteer Award. The award is given annually to recognize an individual for outstanding service to the Greenfield community.

Starting at 4 p.m., musical acts took the stage, vendors sold food, drinks and children’s toys, and a small train circled the field giving rides to children and adults. Blankets and folding chairs peppered the field. As the sun set, families and friends

SEE FIREWORKS A6

Fireworks

FROM A1

gathered to play Yahtzee, toss baseballs, throw Frisbees and socialize.

Andy Otero Jr., 43, rested on a blanket on the ground with an American flag bannana around his neck, surrounded by his parents, Dorie and Andy Otero Sr., and his girlfriend Kim Stone. They munched on red-white-and-blue Twinkies while waiting for the fireworks to begin, a tradition for the Otero family for at least seven years.

“This is the only place you can see (the fireworks) with no trees in the way,” said the younger Otero. “It’s the best spot.”

Otero Jr. is somewhat of an expert on local fireworks shows. In just one year, he attended Independence Day fireworks displays in Greenfield, Easthampton, South Hadley, Chicopee, Springfield, East Longmeadow, Holyoke and Enfield, Conn., as well as at Six Flags New England. He now travels 45 minutes each

year to see Greenfield’s fireworks.

“It’s a small, nice community,” he said of Greenfield.

“It’s just more peaceful out here,” said Ed Moczulewski of Leeds, who was attending the Greenfield show for the first time in 20 years. “I’ve always liked these the best because they shoot them off the tower.”

Moczulewski served in the Army from 1979 to 1981, when he was stationed in Germany.

Being a veteran, Independence Day fireworks have taken on a whole new meaning for Moczulewski.

“I love coming to the fireworks because it’s all about what this country’s really about,” he said. “It’s all about our freedom.”

Sharon Godin of Orange feels similarly about Independence Day’s significance after talking with a Vietnam War veteran about her

wartime experience.

“You learn more as you get older and appreciate what people have done for this country,” she said.

Godin has been coming to Greenfield’s fireworks show for eight years, and brought her children, grandchildren and extended family to spend the day with her.

“This is a big tradition for my family every year,” Godin said of Greenfield’s Independence Day festivities. “We set

up early, hang out, enjoy maple fried dough and do kid stuff.”

Greenfield’s Independence Day festivities provide Godin and her family a time to be silly, roll around, blow bubbles, play with glow sticks, throw Frisbees and skip across the field.

“Life really started counting when the grandchildren came along,” she said. “The kids teach you to be in the moment

“The kids teach you to be in the moment and that’s what’s important.”

SHARON GODIN
Orange resident



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Taygen Daignault, 6, of Greenfield has his face painted at the Greenfield Independence Day fireworks celebration at Beacon Field, Saturday.

and that’s what’s important.”

Alicia Lachance, 18, of Athol came to the event for the second year in a row with three friends. In addition

to appreciating the environ-

ment and how the fireworks are launched from the tower, Lachance enjoys the opportunity to be with those who are

important to her.

“I just really enjoy the Fourth of July,” she said. “It’s a fun time to go out with friends.”



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Left, Dennis Therrien of Greenfield sits on his bike and watches one of the bands perform at the Greenfield Independence Day fireworks celebration at Beacon Field, Saturday. Right, attendees line up in front of the food vendors prior to the fireworks display.