



PARKS AND RECREATION

PRESS RELEASE

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JULY 4 FIREWORKS

The Athens Parks Foundation, Inc. announces July 4 fireworks display named after Buddy Liner

ATHENS, TENNESSEE – June 19, 2020 – The Athens Parks Foundation has announced the July 4 Fireworks display has been named after former Foundation trustee and community supporter Buddy Liner, who passed away in January 2020. Buddy successfully served as fireworks fundraising chair for the Foundation beginning in 2013, ensuring Athens had a show that rivaled larger cities, at a time when continuing the show was in doubt. In addition to the fireworks, Buddy was known for his fundraising for local projects, including the McMinn County High School Athletic Facility Campaign, E.G. Fisher Public Library, McMinn Senior Activity Center, Tennessee Wesleyan University, Boy Scouts of America and the United Way of McMinn & Meigs Counties. The Foundation felt it fitting to honor Buddy, with this naming, in recognition of his years of service as a trustee and for his love of his community.

“It was indeed my privilege working with Buddy on numerous projects but particularly the fireworks show. When we lost our funding in 2013, Buddy stepped up and made sure his community had fireworks. I will never forget the first time Buddy watched the show with me up close and watching him smile afterward and say, “Dad Gum that was great,” said Austin Fesmire, Foundation President and Director of the Athens Parks and Recreation Department. “It is so fitting that Buddy be recognized annually, during the largest attended and most loved event we sponsor, considering how much he loved Athens,” said Fesmire.

“I am pleased that I had the opportunity to work with Buddy for several years as a trustee on the Foundation and on the fireworks campaign. Buddy was so positive about Athens and his passion for the fireworks was evident as he literally knocked on doors to make sure Athens celebrated Independence Day in a big way,” said Bob Sevigny, Chairman of the Foundation Board of Trustees. “Buddy left a lasting impression on Athens and we have designed this firework show in his honor to do the same,” said Sevigny.

Speaking for the Liner family, Buddy’s son Chris commented, “On behalf of our family, we are humbled by this thoughtful act that the City of Athens and the Parks Foundation Board is wanting to recognize our dad, by placing his name on the annual 4th of July fireworks show title moving forward. Our dad left a lasting impression with our family, that it’s better to lead by your actions than with your words. Dad demonstrated this by serving our community on the Athens City Board of Education for 16 years and by serving on the Athens Utilities Board for 21 years. In addition, he let his actions continue to speak as he had a passion for spearheading fundraising campaigns that benefited our community in many areas for years to come. I know that mom and dad will take great pride in looking down upon the friendly city from their heavenly perch as the citizens of our community enjoy the magnificent fireworks show on the 4th of July.”

The July 4 Fireworks will be shot from the Athens Regional Park on Saturday, July 4 at 9:30PM and will be a high-altitude 18-minute show designed to increase the viewing area. The park will not be open to the public at all on July 4 due to the show requiring a larger than normal safety zone that comes with the larger shells required for this type of show. Those wishing to view the show are asked to find locations outside of the park where they can maintain social distance.

“One of the hurdles we initially faced with the fireworks was how we could shoot them while allowing people to follow social distance guidelines,” said Fesmire. “As I discussed the issue with Pyro Shows we came upon the idea of going higher so we would be above the trees with all of the fireworks. Of course, additional altitude requires more lift and more lift is accomplished with larger shells, which require a much larger safety zone inside of the park. Thankfully the park has enough room to launch these types of shells. Even though it requires closing the park, I guarantee you Pyro Shows has put together a show for Athens that any city, large or small, would be envious of. Some of these large shells will literally break across the length of the park,” said Fesmire.

This will be the largest display of fireworks ever in McMinn County and will be preceded, at 8:30PM, by a flyover from the 134th Air Refueling Wing from the McGee Tyson TN Air National Guard Base. The flyover will be directed down Highway 11 as a salute to the men and women in uniform serving our country.

Live radio coverage, of the event including the choreographed music, will be broadcast on WJSQ 101.7 FM, and WLAR 1450 AM, 95.1 FM.

The Foundation would like to recognize the corporate sponsors including Denso, the City of Athens, McMinn County Tourism, Comcast, The Daily Post Athenian, Willsonthropic, Kidzcare Pediatrics, Athens Insurance, All McMinn Modern Professionals (AMMP), Smith Funeral and Cremation Services of Athens and private sponsors including Margaret Mahery, Bob Sevigny, David and Karen Siklosi and several anonymous contributors.

The City of Athens is a full-service municipality nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains and has garnered a reputation as the “Friendly City.”

For more information, please contact the Office of Parks & Recreation at (423) 744-2700 extension 3.

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