

GREENFIELD

LIT UP FOR LIBERTY



Fireworks burst in the sky over Beacon Field in Greenfield for the Independence Day celebration on Saturday.

STAFF PHOTO/BELLA LEVAVI

Independence Day fireworks attendees not deterred by hazy skies

By **BELLA LEVAVI**
Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — Staff and volunteers with the Recreation Department have been organizing the annual Independence Day fireworks celebration for so long, Recreation Director Christy Moore says they have it “down to a science.”

While the Recreation Department is used to preparing for rain and had set a July 15 rain date in the event of inclement weather on Saturday, the city was instead faced with hazy skies and poor air quality due to ongoing Canadian wildfires. Still, the conditions did

not deter the droves of people who convened at Beacon Field to watch the annual fireworks display, nor the people who launched them from Poet’s Seat Tower.

“The people who set up the fireworks were not concerned with the smoke,” Moore said, “but it is a very unfortunate situation in Canada.”

The Recreation Department spearheads fundraising efforts to support the annual celebration, which is growing more expensive. With a goal of \$20,000, roughly \$8,000 had been raised through the second annual Cornhole Tour-



STAFF PHOTO/BELLA LEVAVI

Staff of the Greenfield Recreation Department attend the Independence Day celebration in festive gear.

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Greenfield Recreation Director Christy Moore presents the Fortin Family Award to Amy Proietti on Saturday.

Fireworks display highlights Fourth of July events

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ment, event sponsors and private donations ahead of Saturday's festivities. The department continued to collect donations during the event, and online donations are accepted at greenfieldrecreation.com/fireworks.html.

With the recent opening of the Greenfield Skate Park Moore said the Recreation Department had less time to solicit sponsors than usual, but still got the festivities together in time for the big show.

"Everyone who comes to this needs to make a contribution for this to continue to happen," Moore said.

Entertainment

To keep attendees entertained hours before the fireworks begin at Beacon Field, the Recreation Department organizes a slew of performances, bringing

together new acts and long-time favorites such as the Greenfield Military Band.

First-time performers The Uncles, with members coming from Charlemont and Heath, play what they described as eclectic music ranging from blues to jazz to rock.

"We look forward to the fireworks every year," said Dennis Avery, a member of The Uncles. "We are happy to be a part of the event."

Immediately before the national anthem is sung and the fireworks are lit, the roughly 30-person Greenfield Military Band takes the stage.

Director Al Benjamin said the group is a community band with an historic name, and the fireworks celebration is the biggest event the band plays each year. He recounted how the celebration has evolved over the years, with the band once playing on grass

(even in a torrential downpour one year), then under a tent, and now on a large, well-lit stage.

"It is always a fun and exciting event," Benjamin said. "People aren't here for us, even though they always give a huge applause; they are here for the fireworks."

Fortin Family Award

One tradition of the Independence Day fireworks celebration is the presentation of the Fortin Family Award, which pays tribute to Tina and Ken Fortin, a family that regularly volunteered for Greenfield Recreation and the Friends of Greenfield Recreation across three decades. The award recognizes an individual or family who embodies selflessness and commitment in their volunteer efforts.

Moore presented this year's Fortin Family Award

to Amy Proietti, chair of the Greenfield School Committee.

"Amy is a leader in our community," Moore said, "and volunteers at many Recreation Department events throughout the year."

Proietti is known for volunteering as a commentator at the Greenfield Triathlon, patrolling the streets during the Winter Carnival to protect the ice sculptures from vandalism and simply stepping up to help at recreation events, such as volunteering to coach the Buddy Baseball program.

"If they need help, I will help," Proietti said, adding that helping ensure Recreation Department events run smoothly "feels like the right thing to do."

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