

GREENFIELD

Magic in the sky

Wisty Rorabacher receives the 2025 Fortin Family Volunteer Award

By MADISON SCHOFIELD
Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — The city was bursting with pride and fireworks this weekend as hundreds gathered at Beacon Field for the annual Independence Day celebration.

Crowds gathered on Saturday to celebrate the July 4 holiday, which Greenfield Recreation Director Christy Moore says is really about celebrating the community that makes the day happen, as well as the collaboration between city departments, volunteers, and community donors.

“It really, truly is a celebration for the community, and it takes the entire city, and various departments to make it happen,” Moore said. “It’s a city event ... It’s their way of coming together and making memories with family and friends. That’s what community is all about.”

By 4:30 p.m., families were already setting up and claiming their spots on the field, and by 8:30, an hour before the fireworks began, the field was packed full of local residents enjoying all the music and food Beacon Field has to offer.

“There’s gotta be something for everybody’s palate here, from savory to sweet. There’s fried dough, french fries, fried Oreos, anything that is deep fried I think you can get here,” Moore said.

Amherst resident Dédé Wilson agreed that the food and the people are two of the best parts of the holiday. She has been coming to Greenfield to watch the fireworks show for six years. According to Moore, Wilson and her crew have always had the most impressive setups and have previously set up couches in the middle of the field to enjoy the fireworks. This year, she brought plenty of blankets and lawn chairs, as well as tables to set up a buffet of foods for her friends to enjoy and a chandelier so they could all find her in the midst of the crowd.

“It’s my thing, I love feeding people and hosting parties, and this is my favorite fireworks,” Wilson said.

Some attendees brought card games and balls to play catch while waiting for the fireworks to begin, others danced and sang along to the musical acts performing, including Well Suited, Janet Ryan and Straight Up, the Greenfield Community Band, and Leila Bosman, who sang the national anthem.

Attendees also celebrated Greenfield’s Wisty Rorabacher, this year’s recipient of the Fortin Family Volunteer Award. The award is presented annually to the resident, family, or organization that best displays a dedication to Greenfield in memory of Ken and Tina Fortin, Moore said. For the past five years, Rorabacher has been leading a charge to remove invasive species from the Green River Swimming and Recreation area.

“Anyone who knew the Fortin family knows how much they gave to the Recreation Department and to the Friends of Greenfield Recreation. The Fortins contributed so much of their time, and their family’s time, spanning three decades. They were the driving force behind the fireworks returning to Greenfield. They have left a lasting impression that will never be forgotten.

“Wisty is a true leader in our community whose dedication and hard work not only supported the Recreation De-



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Fireworks burst in the air over Poet’s Seat Tower at the fireworks celebration at Beacon Field Saturday evening.

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Rorabacher earns Fortin award

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partment, but have made a real difference in our local environment," Moore continued. "She was in awe of the variety of the native wildflowers growing throughout the Green River Swimming and Recreation area and wanted to do everything she could to protect them from native species ... She rallied the troops and recruited volunteers from across the community to form the flood plain forest restoration project."

Rorabacher's group meets weekly to cut back and remove knotweed and other invasive species and has organized identification signage and wildflower walks.

"Wisty has shown a tireless commitment to restoring natural habitats. Her hands on work has not only made significant impact on the park, but has also inspired a deeper sense of stewardship in the community," Moore said. "Wisty reminds us all the real change begins with action, and sometimes the action starts with a pair of gloves, clippers and a deep love for the land."

After being brought on stage and presented with her award, Rorabacher said she was honored and surprised. She welcomes all to join her group on Tuesdays and Sundays in cleaning up the recreation area and taking care of the land.

"I just love Greenfield," Rorabacher said. "I love the land, I love the hills, I just don't love invasive species ... I had no idea this was happening."

After music and awards, it was time for the star of the show: the fireworks.

"It's really a breathtaking view, you can see them from anywhere around the valley. People watch them from all over the hilltowns, but obviously they're even more spectacular here because you're up close," Moore said. "It's amazing, I don't know how they get in these little shells such bright colors and designs."



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Fireworks burst in the air over Poet's Seat Tower at the fireworks celebration at Beacon Field Saturday evening.



A family stops to pet a friendly dog named Lucky at the fireworks celebration at Beacon Field Saturday evening.

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Moore said Greenfield's celebrations were made possible by a collaboration of the recreation department, Fire, Police, Health and Public Works Departments, and the event sponsors.

She particularly wanted to thank the team of fireworks shooters who were stationed at Poets Seat Tower, as they were the ones who "make the magic happen in the sky," and

the weather, which cooperated and gave the city a sunny day to celebrate.

"I'm grateful it's such a beautiful day," Moore said. "It's been a number of years since we've had such gorgeous weather for the celebration."

Reach Madison Schofield at 413-930-4579 or mschofield@recorder.com