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## THE GREAT FOREST PARK BALLOON RACE WILL “LIFT UP ST. LOUIS” IN CHANGE OF PLANS

Beautiful balloons will fill the skies of St. Louis Sept. 17–20, in a series of tribute flights

The Great Forest Park Balloon Race, the largest and longest-running balloon festival in the Midwest, has been canceled for 2020.

While the festival will not proceed as originally planned, hot air balloon fans will still have the opportunity to see balloons soar over St. Louis in September. “We encourage the community to take heart because our team is determined to take to the skies, bring smiles and **Lift Up St. Louis**,” said Jessica Stegen, director of communications and event production for The Great Forest Park Balloon Race.

With the new theme, **Lift Up St. Louis**, The Great Forest Park Balloon Race, its dedicated local pilots and generous sponsors are hard at work on plans to surprise and delight St. Louis with colorful hot air balloons flying from various locations throughout the Greater St. Louis area. These tribute flights will honor essential workers, educators, healthcare heroes and those standing up for change, and will take place Sept. 17–20 — spanning the days the traditional event was originally scheduled.

Along with the multiple tribute flights, The Great Forest Park Balloon Race team is working closely with sponsors, including presenting sponsor PNC Bank, to develop exciting ways to bring hot air balloons and smiles to families.

“The Great Forest Park Balloon Race has a wonderful history of bringing St. Louis together, and we will preserve that tradition in 2020 by committing to **Lift Up St. Louis**,” said Michael Scully, PNC regional president for St. Louis. “PNC Bank recognizes and applauds the countless individuals, organizations and industries that have helped lift up our community — and that continue to be a source of courage and inspiration as our city presses on toward recovery. We look forward to joining The Great Forest Park Balloon Race team to coordinate these tributes, while looking toward the future with hope.”

The annual September tradition typically spans two days and has been bringing families and friends together for 47 years of “wow” moments, new experiences and memories that last a lifetime. Thanks to

the generous contributions of Race sponsors, attendance is always free. The festival will return to its home at Central Fields in Forest Park in September 2021.

“During the past several months of planning, along with exhaustive research on how to host this free, family event safely during a pandemic, our team held out hope to launch as planned this September,” said Stegen. “Unfortunately, due to the continued uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, there are many variables that are out of our control, potentially impacting the health and welfare of our attendees. For that reason, we made the difficult decision to cancel the Race.”

“Stay tuned and keep your eyes to the skies,” said Brian Schettler, Race partner. “While we cannot host the 48<sup>th</sup> annual Great Forest Park Balloon Race in the way we all want to, The Great Forest Park Balloon Race has its attention turned to honoring those who are helping **Lift Up St. Louis** through these challenging times. Our planning team continues to be hard at work developing creative ways to bring big smiles to St. Louis families in small but impactful ways this September.”

Updates and announcements will continue to be posted to The Great Forest Park Balloon Race’s social channels and the event website, [www.greatforestparkballoonrace.com](http://www.greatforestparkballoonrace.com).

- Instagram @greatforestparkballoonrace
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#### About The Great Forest Park Balloon Race

The Great Forest Park Balloon Race is a two-day event held in St. Louis, Missouri – annually celebrating soft landings and family traditions since 1973. It is the second oldest balloon race in the United States and remains a free event for everyone to enjoy. The Great Forest Park Balloon Race was inducted into the permanent collection of the Library of Congress on May 23, 2000. The induction honors the race as a Local Legacy and documents the race as a “meaningful and significant American community tradition.”

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