Freedom Balloon Fest
Mission Update, Background & Community Information

Our Mission

★ Remember our fallen service men and women
★ Honor our Gold Star and military families.
★ Celebrate our freedom as a welcoming community of servant volunteers.

Fast Facts…
★ A hot air balloon festival to be held at Fleming Loop Park, Fuquay-Varina, NC Memorial Day Weekend (May 25-28, 2018)
★ Admission Free, Family Focused Event
★ Nightly Mass Balloon Ascension & Balloon Glow
★ Balloon Competition Flights Each Morning (Saturday-Monday, Wind/Wx Permitting)
★ Tethered Balloon Rides & Public Balloon Rides Available For A Fee
★ Stage Featuring Local & Regional Music - Americana, Country, Roots
★ Festival Environment With Food, Field Games, Interactive Sponsor & Military Displays
★ Other Special Events Planned For The Days Leading Up The Festival Weekend

2016-2017: Our Numbers & Audience Diversity…
In 2016, the festival drew an estimated 74,000 attendees. Attendance swelled to an estimated 100,000 in 2017. Our research indicates that 45-50% of those attending come from within 50 miles of the festival site; 35% from within 140 miles; and, 10-15% from greater than 140 miles.
With good weather, we anticipate 2018 attendance to continue to build upon past consumer support.

Our festival audience is diverse and family driven. And, they are community minded. Our research indicates that nearly 65% of those adults in attendance came with children. Almost all income groups were represented with 1 in 5 having some connection to the military. In spite of broad income diversity available data indicates our likely event attendees are more affluent - over 44% have household incomes greater than $80,000/year.

Community Impact: The Opportunity Continues…
Freedom Balloon Fest is an all-volunteer event built on the mission to serve and showcase the best of the local community. As such:

★ Big Tent Thinking… In 2017, through its Freedom Balloon Fest mission, Project Uplift USA created opportunities for other charities to raise more than $35,000 (that were reported) while also highlighting their programs in front of the thousands of who attended the free event produced by our volunteers supported by our underwriters and donors.

★ In 2017, Project Uplift USA volunteers donated more than 5,200 man hours to produce Freedom Balloon Fest.

★ Freedom Balloon Fest continued to grow its development of volunteerism among youth populations through its partnership with Civil Air Patrol. The CAP held an on-site encampment throughout the festival weekend. Supervised by senior members, CAP Cadets held vigil over the festival’s Field of Flags throughout the course of the Memorial Day weekend. Cadets served as honor guard members for Gold Star family members during the festival’s Opening & Closing Ceremonies, and daily, raised and retired the park’s main US Flag in proper ceremonies. Cadets also took part in basic lighter-than-air ground school programs conducted by certificated pilots and served as ground crew during the hot air balloon glow events.

★ Project Uplift USA’s STEAM-based K-12 Education & Youth Outreach launched in conjunction with the festival in 2015. Since inception, volunteer pilots have engaged more than 18,500 students, summer campers and at-risk youth across North Carolina using the power of hot air balloons as a tool for engaging and uplifting the minds of young learners.

Target Area of Program Improvement…
Project Uplift USA is still building consistent relationships for its Mobility Balloon Program. This outreach initiative offers participants adaptive experiences for those with mobility experience to enjoy hot air balloons. There are two key targets: military families newly adapting to mobility challenges related to military service and families with children living with mobility challenges. Secondary target audiences also include military populations seeking opportunities to bond with...
fellow veterans through teamwork-based exercises by serving as crew members for one of our Mobility Balloon teams. Key challenges include:

★ Program Awareness
★ Continuity among those who serve military populations living with mobility challenges. They often change work assignments after only a short period of time; establishing relationships is a challenge.
★ Funding. Program awareness funding through a targeted campaign could help create a more scheduled series of events where those seeking to engage in mobility oriented events could participate. Currently, this program is supported primarily by the pilots donation of time and vehicles with some support only for propane and transportation costs.
★ Measurable outcomes are difficult to obtain. Due to the infrequent nature of participation (weather, one-time experience), many underwriters view the experience as “difficult” to measure the value of supporting such an underwriting investment.

Our Host Community…
The town of Fuquay-Varina (pronounced few-kway vah-reen-uh) is located in southern Wake County and is a 25-minute drive south of Raleigh, the capital of North Carolina. Fuquay-Varina initially grew due to tobacco trade and agriculture, but has seen significant population growth and real estate development over the last decade due to its proximity to the Research Triangle Park and the area’s three major research universities. Currently, Fuquay-Varina is home to more than 27,000 residents and welcoming newcomers to add to the fabric of its growing, creative economy that has become an emerging player in the dynamic Triangle family of communities.

The Town of Fuquay-Varina serves as Host Community of Freedom Balloon Fest providing mission-critical public safety and fire support services. This support infrastructure demonstrates a core component of public support.
Where Your Festival Underwriting, Sponsorship & Donation Dollars Go…

Fleming Loop Park is wide open space. It’s an ideal place to host a large festival like Freedom Balloon Fest. Almost everything required to make the festival come to life has to be donated, borrowed, rented or bought. Fortunately, we have an amazing Host Community with the Town of Fuquay-Varina. As previously noted, the Town provides critical public safety, fire, water and IT infrastructure services.

Freedom Balloon Fest has a goal to remain admission-free, but producing the festival isn’t free. In 2017, Project Uplift USA received over $138,000 of budget relieving services including those provided by the Town of Fuquay-Varina and a variety sponsors; this includes deep discounts provided by several critical festival vendors. The balance of festival out-of-pocket direct and indirect cash expenses were just over $241,836 with 2018 carry-forward dollars covering rent for festival equipment storage, pre-festival planning, and other year-round Project Uplift USA programs equalling just over $43,023.

As an all-volunteer organization, we have no full-time payroll. We do incur expenses for temporary security and off-duty law enforcement. Project Uplift USA is a Wake County-based,
non-profit that hires local vendors wherever possible. We estimate greater than 85% of our vendors are from within Wake County and another 5-7% are from within the Triangle region.

While Project Uplift USA has enjoyed strong support from local agencies, other non-profits, and corporate sponsors, our volunteers are working to increase grassroots donations in 2018. While the gift of 5,200+ man hours in 2017 from among more than 350 volunteers is likely the greatest measure of community support, we believe cash contributions from individual donors will signal greater awareness and understanding of our community messages and missions.

Additional Chart Notes
Direct Festival Expenses
1. In-Kind Services & Goods - Includes goods and services donated, which directly relieve expenses deemed critical to conduct the festival. Also includes certain discounts for portions of fees paid to certain vendors. Best efforts are made to calculate fair market value for in-kind contributions.
2. Equipment Rental - Includes portable toilets, tents, chairs, zoom fence, stage equipment lights/sound, light towers, power generation, power distribution
3. Sponsor Fulfillment - refers to on-site hospitality, catering, food/beverages, banners, signs including directional signs
4. Purchased Equipment - Includes non-consumable equipment, supplies, diesel and LPB
5. Talent & Temp Security - Local Entertainers & Overnight/Temporary Security
6. Specialty Insurance
7. Pilot Expense - Includes travel stipends and prize money
8. Hotel Rooms
9. Printing & Collateral
10. Major Sponsor Recognition - includes balloon appearances and post-event payments to 3rd party charities for funds raised

Festival & In-Direct Annual Expenses
11. Annualized Expenses - Professional Services, off-season equipment storage, bank fees, software fees, dues & subscriptions, other insurance, taxes & licenses

Other PUUSA Program Expense (Not Festival Related)
12. Non-Festival Programs - Fuel reimbursement and meals


Future Growth
The next evolution of Freedom Balloon Fest is expansion to a 10-11 day model by as early as 2019. The festival would still be hosted in and around Fuquay-Varina and begin on the Friday before Memorial Day. The festival would continue through the following week and weekend, and include a continuation of hot air balloon competition events each morning/evening, as well as afternoon/evening street festival-type functions held likely in downtown in Fuquay-Varina. Other events in surrounding communities have also been discussed based upon support. The goal is to broaden support and impact throughout the Triangle-region to the greatest level possible. Leveraging the Triangle region’s diverse resources, the balloon competition would invite pilots from an international pool of as many as 60 pilots (with sufficient underwriting support) from countries around the globe.