

Fireworks a longtime tradition at Coleman Memorial Park in Lebanon

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Fireworks light up the sky as they explode over Coleman Memorial Park in Lebanon Thursday night. The annual July 4th celebration has been a tradition at the city park since 1952. (LEBANON DAILY NEWS JOEL SHANNON)

July 4th fireworks at Coleman Memorial Park are a longtime Lebanon tradition.

In 1952, the Lebanon Police Department and the Lebanon Playground Association joined forces to organize a 12-hour event at Coleman Memorial Park for the first time, according to an article published in the Lebanon Daily News on July 3, 1952.

Prior to that, local fireworks were held annually at the Chautauqua in Mt. Gretna, Lebanon County Club and Avon Community Playground, among other locations.

The event at Coleman Park was greatly anticipated.

"A gigantic and spectacular display of brilliant and colorful fireworks will climax Lebanon's first annual community picnic and play day to be held tomorrow at Coleman Park," the article stated.



Lifeguard Adam Lough, 19, sports an American flag on his arm as he guards the Lauther Memorial Water Complex Thursday in Coleman Memorial Park, Lebanon. Crowds cooled off in the pool in the afternoon before the annual fireworks display in the park later that night. (LEBANON DAILY NEWS JOEL SHANNON)

"Baseball games, band music, dancing, and one of the biggest fireworks displays ever seen in Lebanon are just a few of the organized entertainment planned for your enjoyment."

The July 4 community day also saw the dedication of two new baseball fields at the park by then Lebanon Mayor Frederick Miller. Local teams played a pair of baseball games and a softball game on the fields that day.

A performance by the Perseverance Band and a teen-dance prior to the fireworks were also part of the festivities.

To pay for the event, more than \$1,000 was contributed to the Lebanon Police Fireworks Fund. The majority of it came from local residents and community organizations, according to the article.

"The old-fashioned fireworks display was made possible by the generosity of civic-minded citizens and organizations whose contributions not only reached but surpassed the original goal of \$600 by \$266.50," it states.

The fireworks tradition continues today - with old-fashioned public support.

Thursday's fireworks cost about \$10,700 to put on, but only \$3,500 came from the city's general fund, Mayor Sherry Capello said. The rest was raised with contributions from residents and community organizations, including area firefighters and fire police who volunteered their service.

Another thing that hasn't changed in the 60-plus years since the first fireworks display at the park is its popularity. The original July 4 event at Coleman Park in 1952 was a great success, according to the Daily News article published the following day.

"A crowd estimated at nearly 10,000 people spread out over the green slopes of Coleman Park last evening to watch the brilliant one-and-a-quarter hour fireworks display that topped off Lebanon's first annual community picnic and play day."

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