

Popcorn — continued from Page 1



cess, and the event has taken place every first week of August ever since.

With COVID-19 still a major disrupter in the United States, members of the festival committee debated on whether to proceed with the event. Ultimately, several factors led to the event continuing on as scheduled.

“They announced that after the Fourth of July, we could open up,” committee member Marty Mounsey said. “We always have this the first weekend in August. So, we sat and there and looked at this and said, ‘Hey, they said we can open up, so let’s go for it.’”

“It’s an outside event, so obviously you can get out and still socially distance at the same time,” event spokeswoman Lauren Greene added. “I think people were just looking forward to something. They have been cooped up for two or three months.”

The three-day event offered a variety of activities, including the Popcorn Festival parade, a pet parade, the Kernel Klassic 5K run, a car show, mini golf, fireworks, and much more. Additionally, several local bands, including Steal Justice, A Few Good Men, and Mooncats provided musical entertainment throughout the weekend.

Event-goers were greeted with a plethora of food options, including tenderloins, soft pretzels, elephant ears and funnel cakes, Italian sausage, and of course, popcorn.

While attendance was slightly down due to the pandemic, the Popcorn Festival was enthusiastically supported by the Van Buren community and the surrounding areas.

“The attendance has been a little bit lower than normal, but that’s because of COVID,” Mounsey said. “A lot of people are still nervous about coming out, so they don’t want to take any chances, and I understand that. Yet, we still had a lot of people come out, and we appreciate everybody who came out.”

While patrons were not required to wear masks, all of the vendors did, along with other event workers. Furthermore, hand washing and hand sanitizing stations were set up all around the downtown Van Buren area.

“We are doing whatever we can,” Mounsey said. “Our vendors are wearing their masks and stuff like that. We are trying to do whatever we can to be safe.”

After what has been a tumultuous year, the Van Buren Popcorn Festival provided wholesome, family fun, giving the community a chance to reconnect and enjoy the day’s events together.

“It’s real exciting,” Mounsey said. “What I like about it is a lot of people come back for this weekend, because this is when they can catch up with their family and friends. I enjoy that.”

Former firefighter, Indiana fire marshal to be inducted into Marion Hall of Distinction

By Sean Douglas

Throughout his professional life, Mark Tracey Boatwright has worn a plethora of hats - Vietnam veteran, a state legislator, and a lobbyist. However, his greatest achievements are centered on firefighting, Boatwright served as both a firefighter and as the Indiana Fire Marshal for over three decades.

For his accomplishments, Boatwright will be inducted into the Marion Hall of Distinction as part of its 2020 class.

Boatwright attended Marion High School in the late 1950s and early ‘60s. He was heavily involved in athletics, and overall, enjoyed his time as a Giant.

“I had a great time in high school,” Boatwright said. “I was very active in sports. I played baseball for three years and wrestled for three years and ran cross country. I was in a lot of sports. In my senior year, I was named the outstanding wrestler, and I was very proud of that.”

While his high school experience was a positive one, it also helped to shape his future.

“Marion taught me how to get along with people,” Boatwright said. “That was always a big part of high school. I had a couple of really good teachers that I liked, teachers and coaches that I feel like helped me along the way and helped me become what I am today.”

Boatwright graduated from Marion in 1960 and immediately entered the workforce, taking a factory job.

Over the next 13 years, Boatwright worked several jobs,



Mark Boatwright

including working in the iron industry, delivering milk and beer, and selling cars.

But in 1973, after hearing stories from some of his colleagues who moonlighted as firemen, he decided to make the switch.

“I’ve always been the type of person that was first to jump in when somebody needed my help, and I used to drive a beer truck with some guys who were on the fire department, and they used to tell me about [the job,] and I thought, ‘Oh man, what a great feeling and what a great career that would be.’”

Boatwright worked at the Marion Fire Department for 20 years from 1973-1993, after that, he continued working in the fire industry, this time at the state level. As the Fire Marshal, Boatwright oversaw the education and training of firefighters, plus he led the inspection of public buildings and

conducted investigative work into large fires and potential arson.

During his tenure as Fire Marshal, Boatwright also founded the Hoosier Burn Camp in 1997. The Hoosier Burn Camp is a “non-profit organization committed to providing life-changing experiences for young people who have suffered the physical and emotional trauma associated with a severe burn injury,” according to their website.

Boatwright was inspired to make an Indiana-based burn camp after visiting one in Illinois. It really touched his heart how much people cared about those suffering with burn injuries.

The Hoosier Burn Camp started out slowly, with 12 kids attending in its inaugural year, but over time, the camp has continued to grow, helping kids achieve their highest potential. Through the generosity of donors and of volunteers, the camp is provided at no cost to campers and their families.

These days, Boatwright is enjoying retirement, sitting ~~out~~ on his patio, smoking cigars, and listening to country-western music.

With his nomination to the Marion Hall of Distinction, he feels a great sense of achievement.

“It’s a great honor to be recognized for the things I have done in my life,” Boatwright said. “I’ve gotten to do a lot of exciting and wonderful things in my life. The Hall of Distinction is the icing on the cake.”

Get the latest COVID-19 information from the Indiana State Department of Health at <http://www.statehealth.in.gov/>

Answers for Crossword and Suduko puzzles

8	3	9	6	7	5	2	4	1
2	5	4	8	1	3	9	7	6
1	7	6	9	4	2	5	8	3
4	1	5	2	3	7	6	9	8
9	6	3	5	8	4	7	1	2
7	8	2	1	9	6	4	3	5
3	2	8	7	5	9	1	6	4
6	4	7	3	2	1	8	5	9
5	9	1	4	6	8	3	2	7

R	U	S	T			S	A	R	T	R	E				
E	P	H	A			E	C	O	L	O	G	I	S	T	
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C	O	N	T	A	M	I	N	A	T	E	D		D	E	
H	O	T	E	L	S		I	M	A	M		B	D	L	
O	T	O	S			S	T	A	B		F	E	E	L	
				F	A	D	E	S		M	A	N	S	I	
B	A	L	L	A	D					H	A	B	I	T	S
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A	D	P		C	A	E	N		H	A	L	I	D	E	
N	D		P	R	O	F	E	S	S	I	O	N	A	L	
C	I	L	I	A			M	U			T	E	G	U	
E	N	V	E	N	O	M	E	D			H	A	I	G	
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