**Parade, fireworks to highlight Fowlerville 4th of July Celebration**

 The Fowlerville 4th of July Celebration, which takes place on Sunday, will once again be highlighted by an evening parade that starts at 7 p.m. and a fireworks display at 10 p.m.

 Garhart ‘Gary’ and Mary Helfmann are serving as this year’s parade Grand Marshals. The Helfmann’s are active in various community and professional organizations and, as owners of a rental business with locations in Howell and Lansing, have been willing donors for different events—both with tents and other equipment and financial assistance.

 New this year will be the landing of a Blackhawk helicopter at the Fowlerville Community Park at 1 p.m. The First Baptist Church, meanwhile, will host their “God & Country Celebrtion prior to the parade from 3 to 6 p.m., while the Fowlerville United Brethren Church will have a “4th of July Party” that starts after the parade and continues until the fireworks.

 There’ll be inflatables at the Park and food vendors located in the Downtown and at the Community Park during the day and evening and at the fairgrounds prior to the fireworks.

 “We’re looking forward to putting on this event after last year’s celebration had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Brandon Denby, chair of the organizing committee. “It’ll be nice to get the community back together to enjoy the various activities that are planned.”

 The inflatables—provided courtesy of the Michigan Army National Guard—will be set up near the park pavilion, with kids able to start using them at noon.

 The Blackhawk helicopter is also being provided by the National Guard and is scheduled to land in the outfield area of the two ball fields. Extra special is the fact that it will be flown by three 2008 Fowlerville High School graduates and current residents: CW3 Ian Mihfeld (pilot in command), CW2 Mike Mallon (pilot) and Sgt. John Tiefenbach (crew chief).

 “The public is encouraged to watch the helicopter land, with the Blackhawk and crew available after that for a close-up view, photos, and to answer questions,” said Denby, adding that the helicopter will depart at 4:30 p.m.

 The “God & Country Celebration” will be held at the Baptist Church on South Grand River Avenue. Games, inflatables, food, a bingo tent, mini-golf, and a 3-point contest are among the activities. A Corn Hole Tournament will take place, starting at 4 p.m. Sign-up for this competition begins at 3 p.m.

 The United Brethren’s “4th of July Party” features food, summer treats, and live music. The public is also invited to watch the fireworks from the church grounds. The church is located at 9300 W. Grand River.

 The parade route will start at Veterans Drive on the west end of town and then proceed east along Grand River Avenue through the Downtown to the St. Agnes Catholic Church parking lot. Joe Hune, the former Fowlerville state legislator, will once again serve as the emcee, while Michelle Soli will be singing the National Anthem once the Honor Guard reaches the Main Four corners.

 The organizing committee has launched a new award this year, named after ‘Smokey the Clown’ aka Allen Hale who was a founding member of the committee. Hale, who passed away in 2011, headed the crew that launched the fireworks. He was a longtime member of the local fire department and served on the Webberville Village Council, where he and his wife Liz and family resided. Part of that time on council included a stint as Village president.

 As ‘Smoky the Clown,’ he took part in different community events, most notably at Kids Day during the Fowlerville Family Fair.

 “Allen Hale was a longtime community volunteer and a key part in putting on the annual July 4th Celebration, so we wanted to name the award in his honor,” said Brandon Denby. “The recipient will be someone who reflects his many years of involvement and commitment to this community.”

 Plans are to announce the inaugural winner of the
Allen’ Smokey’ Hale Community Patriot of the Year Award after the singing of the National Anthem.

 As for parade participants, Denby urged churches, organizations, businesses, and interested individuals to take part. While reservations are not required, if you’d like to reserve a spot or have questions email Michelle Soli at michellesoli@yahoo.com .

 He noted that floats, marching units, classic cars, tractors, horses, and decorated bikes are among the types of entries that are welcome to take part. Denby added that elected officials and political candidates are welcome as well. Line-up begins at 5:45 p.m. at Veterans Drive.

 As always, the main attraction of the Celebration and the concluding act is the fireworks display. Prime viewing areas are the Community Park and the Fowlerville Fairgrounds. While entrance to those venues is free, a $5 donation to help pay for next year’s fireworks is requested.

 “The value of this year’s fireworks is around $16,000,” said Denby, who noted that the display typically lasts around a half-hour. “We feel we’ll be offering a very entertaining show this Sunday night, and our goal for next year is to put on an even more spectacular display. We invite everyone to come out, have fun, and celebrate our nation’s birthday.”