

**2009 Economic Impact Report
MidFirst Ohio Challenge
Hot Air Balloon Festival**

\$4.4 million to local economy

Method:

Volunteers using mechanical hand-held counting devices tabulated data from those entering the main parking gate at Middletown Regional Airport and at the Handicap auto and walking entrance at Wilbraham Road. No actual counts were taken at the other entrances: footbridge from Tytus, former main entrance at Tytus, Columbia Avenue, bike path or for those observing from airport hangars, the Carmody Blvd area, Forest Hills Country Club or the businesses on Hook Drive.

Based on data collected and estimates from organizers, a figure was established for each of days of the event. Note that 2009 was two days of festival combined with two morning flights. Totals include volunteers, vendors, performers, etc, all of whom spend money while in Middletown and on-site. Additional volunteers asked a sampling of guests where they lived and how they heard about the event.

Attendance:

	2003	2004	2005		2006	2007		2008		2009	
Friday	17,550	24,000	15,730	--28%	12,113--16.5%	21,250	--29%	13,154	--22%	24,500	36%
Saturday	24,855	38,500	32,650	--58%	37,980 --52%	39,150	--53%	40,099	--68%	43,325	64%
Sunday	12,306	9,000	7,960	--14%	23,107--31.5%	13,400	--18%	5,844	--10%	N/A	
Totals	54,711	71,500	56,340		73,200	73,800		59,097		67,825	

People came from:

Butler County	58%	39%	52%	43%	58%	31%	56%
Warren County	16%	30%	15%	11%	12%	17%	18%
Montgomery	12%	13%	6%	11%	8%	12%	6%
Hamilton County	4%	4%	6%	13%	3%	2%	6%
Preble County	1%	4%	6%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Within 1 hour drive	91%	90%	85%	81%	84%	72%	88%
Beyond 1 hour drive	9%	10%	15%	19%	16%	28%	12%
Ohio	96%	98%	95%	97%	97%	88%	94%
Other States	4%	2%	5%	3%	3%	12%	6%

People heard about Ohio Challenge from:

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
TV	4%	7%	3%	7%	1%	11%
Newspapers	42%	43%	52%	59%	36%	37%
Magazines	5%	6%	2%	1%	0%	2%
Radio	33%	5%	2%	4%	2%	7%
Website	8%	6%	12%	8%	24%	20%
Other	8%	33%	29%	21%	27%	60%

(Word of Mouth, Vendors, Decals on Truck, Car Show Flyers, Signage, Family Tradition)

In 2009, counts were taken for Word of Mouth – 25% and Tradition/”We come every year” – 32%--included in the Other category

Website statistics www.midfirstohiochallenge.com:

	2007	2008.....	... 2009
Visits	14,900*	41,908.....	19,696**

*No figures for August – December

**January thru June only

Economic Impact 2009:

Method:

In the first two years, a 1990’s multiplier figure of \$35 per person was used to determine the economic impact on the Middletown community from events. In researching other nearby or similar events in Indiana, Michigan and other states, multipliers currently in use ranged from \$67 per person, per day for day-trippers to \$171 per day for those staying in motels. One state used an average of \$115 per person per day. Another \$104 per day. We have chosen to remain conservative but take into account inflation over the past 15 years and have raised our multiplier figure for all local events to \$65.

While no general multiplier figure will be completely accurate, it is a best estimate we can use to fairly indicate the importance of an event to the local economy. The daily multiplier rate takes into account the dollars actually spent by the guest at an event and on gasoline, retail, medical, food, motel and other direct purchases in the community as well as those dollars spent in presenting the event they attend, the jobs generated, supplies purchased, insurance arranged, taxes paid and other ripple-effect spending.

Impact on the local economy due to the MidFirst Ohio Challenge in 2009: \$4.4 million

Local non-profit treasuries also grew as a result of MidFirst Ohio Challenge:

One of the results of the event is that several local non-profit organizations add much-needed dollars to their treasuries. The MidFirst Ohio Challenge organizers “hire” local non-profits for specific duties on-site. Others choose to become food/drink vendors for the weekend. Some even just add their volunteer hours to the committee effort. Our non-profit partners this year are:

Abilities First, Butler County Police Explorers, Edgewood High School Cheerleaders, Falcon Lacrosse Parents, Knight of Columbus, Middletown Board of Realtors, Middletown High School Football Team, Middletown Police Explorers, Middletown Christian Booster Club, Middletown Youth Football, Middletown Youth Soccer, Trenton Cruisers Car Club.

Summary:

As usual, weather played a part in the event. Temperatures were very cool and winds were higher than balloon pilots like on Friday. Friday evening's flight was scrapped but some brave balloonists did on-ground balloon events. Friday and Saturday night skydiver pyro jumps served to hold the crowd on site longer and prevent traffic jams.

Changes in hours and parking were a challenge but yielded the desired results.

Regardless of entertainment offerings, the bulk of the crowd continued to be on site from 4-10 pm. Eliminating the Noon to 4 hours allowed us to compress the activities into the period when most people were there to see and hear the entertainment.

Changing the parking to the airport not only kept wear and tear on the baseball and soccer fields to a minimum but allowed for a smoother traffic flow and a safer pedestrian entrance via Tytus. The resulting drop in parking lot revenue was made up by the increased revenue from pedestrian traffic.

The addition of shuttle bus service from the parking areas to the heart of the event aided many people while others chose to walk the half mile from the parking lot entrance to the same location.

The goal of MidFirst Ohio Challenge is to provide a quality event which draws guests from outside the immediate Middletown area. The aim is to break even each year. It is always a challenge to make income equal expenses. The cost of shuttle buses (doubled for Saturday night) was a significant expense, even though the Grace Baptist Church had volunteer drivers. Buses also came from Miami University, the City of Middletown, Abilities First and Middletown Senior Center.

Even with many thousands of guests paying the \$5 parking or \$2 walk-in admission fee, there are many thousands who pay nothing to enter the grounds and/or enjoy the aerial show from afar. Free parking passes are issued to sponsors, vendors, performers, pilots/crew, volunteers, etc. A huge number of spectators watch from outside the park – Carmody Blvd, airport hangars, businesses on the opposite side of the airport grounds.

Data gathered on site and phone calls received on the event phone line before and during the event indicate audience is attracted from an expanding geographic area.

This year 88% of the surveyed guests came from within the 1-hour drive circle, with 12% driving more than an hour or staying in local hotels.

A growing number of guests are learning of the event by word of mouth, from vendors and balloon pilots speaking well of the event to their peers and from the www.MidFirstOhioChallenge.com website and other calendar, media and camera club websites listing the event.

Media coverage is also expanding. We continue to have good sponsor arrangements with Cox Newspapers (Middletown Journal) and WPFB (910 am and 105.9 fm). Cincinnati TV stations Fox 19 and WCPO TV9 both mentioned the event on their weather broadcasts.

Fifty sponsors and three corporate balloons supported MidFirst Ohio Challenge with their advertising dollars or in-kind services and products.

Prepared by Ann Mort based on data collected during the event by volunteers, 7/22/09