



Ohio Challenge Hot Air Balloon & Skydiving Festival

Middletown, Ohio | July 17–18, 2026

The Ohio Challenge (OC) is a premier, family-oriented community event and the signature festival of Middletown, Ohio. Now in its 23rd year, the event brings together hot air ballooning, skydiving, and aviation experiences to create a unique and memorable celebration that highlights the spirit and vibrancy of the community.

Operating under the Middletown Area Chamber Foundation (501(c)(3)), the Ohio Challenge is led by a dedicated Planning Committee of 20 volunteers. The event traces its roots to

Middletown’s hosting of the U.S. Hot Air Balloon Championships (1992–1994), which inspired the creation of the festival in 2003.

Event Experience

Held annually at Smith Park and Middletown Regional Airport, the Ohio Challenge offers an affordable and engaging experience for families across the region, featuring:

Aerial & Signature Attractions

- 20–25 hot air balloons with launches at dusk and nighttime balloon glow
- 2–5 special shape balloons featured in evening displays
- Team Fastrax skydiving performances, including American Flag and pyrotechnic jumps

Evening Entertainment

- Nightly drone light shows and fireworks
- Live jumbo video boards with ground-to-air event coverage

Interactive Experiences

- Tethered balloon rides and airplane rides
- Children’s carnival rides and “Fluff & Puff” balloon walk-through

Festival Environment

- 30–35 food vendors and 15–20 craft vendors
- Antique car show and community exhibits

The event runs Friday and Saturday from approximately 4:00 PM to 10:30 PM each evening.

Attendance & Regional Reach

Attendance has grown significantly, increasing 54% since 2022 and reaching a record 26,400 attendees in 2024 (weather impacted 2025 attendance). The event draws a broad regional audience, with 76% of attendees coming from Middletown and surrounding communities, and additional visitors from across Ohio and neighboring states.

Economic & Community Impact

The Ohio Challenge generates an estimated **\$2.7 million in economic impact**, supporting local businesses, tourism, and community visibility. As Middletown's signature event, it plays a key role in showcasing the city as a vibrant and welcoming destination.

Digital & Marketing Reach

The event has experienced rapid growth in digital engagement:

- Facebook followers: 7,600 (+52% year-over-year)
- Reach: 312,163 (+71% year-over-year)
- Video views: 1,164,823 (Feb–July 2025)
- Page visits: 82,870 (+70% year-over-year)

These metrics reflect strong and growing regional awareness and provide valuable exposure for sponsors and partners.

Contact Information

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