FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Photo Caption:** The nation’s top hot air balloon pilots will compete in the 6th Annual Balloon Event in Frankenmuth on Memorial Day weekend. The event… “Balloons Over Bavarian” is sponsored by Co-Sponsors Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Lodge and Gordon’s Food Service.

**Hot Air Balloons Fill Skies Over Michigan’s Little Bavaria**

***Frankenmuth River Place Shops Site of Annual Balloon Championship***

April 30, 2013 - Frankenmuth, Mich. -- More than 30 of the nation’s most experienced hot air balloon pilots will challenge each other in various competitions at the ***Balloons Over Bavaria Championship*** over Memorial Day weekend. The fifth annual event is sponsored by the Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn Lodge and Gordon Foods Service. Balloon teams will arrive in Frankenmuth beginning May 23 and compete through May 27.

Balloonists will participate in several early morning flight competitions during the Memorial Day weekend, beginning up-wind of Frankenmuth and flying over the city Friday through Monday. Later in the evening, tethered balloons will illuminate in a colorful “balloon glow village event. The free family event takes place at the Frankenmuth River Place Shops.

“These skilled pilots represent four states in the Midwest,” said Jim Engel, Bavarian Inn Lodge chief operating officer and event chairman. “Many of these expert pilots rank in the top 100 in North America. They are guarenteed to put on a great show.”

Held in conjunction with [***Dog Bowl 2013***](http://dogfunfest.com/balloons/), the balloon championships features an elite group of 32 balloon teams, assembled by a core team of balloon pilots and local planners. Pilots will compete in seven flight attempts beginning May 24 through May 27.

“Balloons over Bavaria is a Midwest favorite,” said Derrick Jones, competition director for the event. “It is perfect for enthusiasts and families, and a great companion to Dog Bowl 2013. Together, these events showcase the lively, festive athmosphere of Frankenmuth and provide families with a great destination for Memorial Day weekend. Add the Tour De Frankenmuth cycling races on May 25 and you have activities for all ages and interests.”

In addition to the balloon competition, visitors will have an opportunity to walk among more than a dozen tethered hot air balloons that glow and flicker in the evening sky. Spectators are invited to meet the pilots, crews, get autographs and even take family pictures near the balloons & baskets. Tethered Balloon Glows will occur Friday – Sunday evenings directly after the evening competitive flights on Riverplace Field.

A free fireworks display will be held May 26 beginning at approximately 9:45 p.m. A complete schedule is available at <http://frankenmuthriverplace.com/balloons>. For more information, call 1-800-600-0105.

NOTE: For families living within a 10-mile radius of Frankenmuth and interested in allowing a hot air balloon to land or launch from your property, please consider the following: Place a white sheet on the available spot beginning early Friday morning until Monday afternoon. Make sure your sheet can be seen from the air, giving balloon pilots permission to land. The hot air balloon community appreciates your support.

**About Frankenmuth River Place Shops**

Frankenmuth River Place Shops ([www.frankenmuthriverplace.com](http://www.frankenmuthriverplace.com)) is an authentic re-creation of a Bavarian village located just minutes from the Bavarian Inn Restaurant and Lodge. The outdoor mall features more than 40 shops and attractions at one location. Visitors enjoy architecture, floral gardens, streams and waterfalls, and of course great shopping opportunities. <http://frankenmuthriverplace.com/newsletter/>

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