



Talking Fourth of July and fireworks with Captain Jim

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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WEST ALTON - Independence Day may fall on a Wednesday this year, but that does not mean it will not go off with a bang and a few crackles.

“Captain” Jim Meyers is at the helm of the oldest family-owned fireworks store in the St. Louis Metro Area – Captain Jim's Fireworks. Since 1947, the year-round fireworks source has been located in West Alton, providing pyrotechnical needs to anyone who comes there. Currently, Meyers said the store has been operating on a grueling 24-hour cycle in order to keep up with demand from the upcoming national holiday.

“We started 24 hours Saturday,” Meyers said. “We are really busy during the day, and while we do have overnight customers who come regularly every year, we mostly do it as a good chance to get the store re-situated.”

He said many of his customers are taking advantage of a two-for-\$200 deal, which includes two 24-shot mortar packs with 60 gram shells. Meyers said customers may choose two of four brands: World Class's Excalibur, Showtime's Lock and Load, Black Cat's Diablo and Brothers's Smoke and Mirrors. He said the deal would save people around \$50.

Those style of fireworks are illegal in Illinois, but Meyers said even law-abiding Illinoisans can still enjoy festive fountains, which he said are getting better this year.

“Some of the new fountains are amazing,” he said. “They crackle really loud and have huge showers of sparks as big as 20 feet across and 30 feet high. Those are legal in Illinois.”

Meyers said fireworks designed for children to enjoy are also getting better. He said some plastic figurines designed to shoot sparks and colored balls of flame are able to be kept as toys following the excitement. These toys include plastic dragons, cars and large chicken-shaped items Meyers said look like overgrown marshmallow Peeps.

Since Independence Day does fall on a Wednesday this year, Meyers said many people will be celebrating as late as July 7, because they have to work Tuesday and Thursday and do not want to celebrate the Declaration of Independence being penned the weekend before the Fourth. Because of that, Meyers believes the usual fizzling of the rush after the Fourth will continue onto the weekend.

“It won't die off like it usually does, because people won't do it the weekend before or the night of, because it falls on a weekday,” he said.

The night of June 27 however, Meyers said the Rizzuto Show from St. Louis-based 105.7 The Point will be hosting a remote broadcast from the store from 6-8 p.m. During that time, Meyers said there will be fireworks, food trucks, t-shirts and chances to win concert tickets and as much as \$2,500 worth of fireworks.

“You have to be present to win, and we'll draw for three items at a time and be giving them away to tons of people,” he said.

Captain Jim's is located at 13896 U.S. Highway 67 in Alton and shares a parking lot with Dirt Cheap. It is a year-round fireworks location selling everything from sparklers to 500-gram finale cakes.