



# MT. VERNON Sentinel



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## Solar eclipse comes to Mount Vernon

*Once-in-a-lifetime event draws a crowd to community*

BY TRAVIS MORSE  
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MOUNT VERNON — The Great North American Eclipse cast its shadow over Mount Vernon and Jefferson County Monday, and it proved to be a fun-filled day for everyone.

One of the hot spots or destinations of interest in town was Veterans Memorial Park, where there was a festival like atmosphere in the morning and afternoon leading up to totality shortly after 2 p.m.

Justin Foley, from California, had camera equipment with solar filtering technology so that he could get quality still photographs and video of the once-in-a-lifetime event. He

is also a member of the Planetary Society, a world-wide organization headquartered in California that is a space advocacy group.

"If the weather holds, then it's an awesome thing to see," Foley said Monday morning. "I've seen one before, one total solar eclipse before, and there's really nothing like it."

Foley said that he chose Mount Vernon because it seemed like an ideal location to view the eclipse.

"I was looking at the forecast and where the path of totality was and it seemed like a good balance between probability of good weather and a decent amount of totality," Foley said.

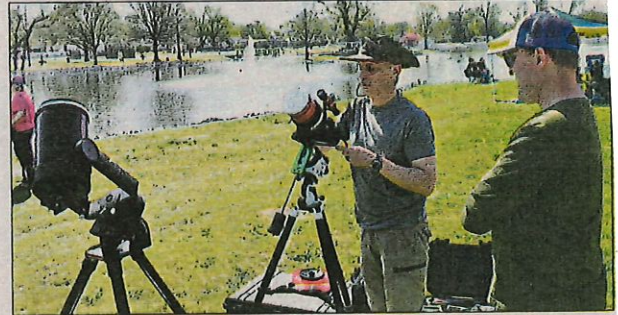
Peter Hortensius from Raleigh, North Carolina, and Bob Davies from Winnipeg in Manitoba, Canada, were also at Veterans Park for the eclipse. They said that they previously viewed an eclipse back in the

late 1970s when they were teenagers.

"It's a cool experience. We both did it when we were 18, 19, and I wanted to do it one more time. Because the next time I can do it, I probably can't do it," Hortensius said. "We picked the (Mount Vernon) area because we haven't really traveled in the area before so we drove out here, and we picked this place because it had the best combination of not too much traffic, because getting closer to St. Louis is getting busy, and here we saw a nice park with a nice bathroom and a nice location."

Stephen Rodriguez, from Virginia, also visited Veterans Park for the eclipse and said that the crowd would be in for a real treat as far as what happens when the totality hits and day turns briefly into night.

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Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

**ADJUSTING CAMERA** — Stephen Rodriguez of Virginia, CENTER, makes some adjustments to his camera equipment prior to Monday's solar eclipse. Also pictured is Shane McDonald of O'Fallon. Both men visited Veterans Park for Monday's event.

### A LOOK FROM OUTLAND AIRPORT



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

John Dries of Wisconsin, FRONT CENTER, visited Mount Vernon Outland Airport with his wife Andi, CENTER REAR, and friends Steve and Peggy Frank to watch and photograph Monday's solar eclipse.

## You really had to be there

*People flocked to Cedarhurst Center for the Arts to view the solar eclipse*

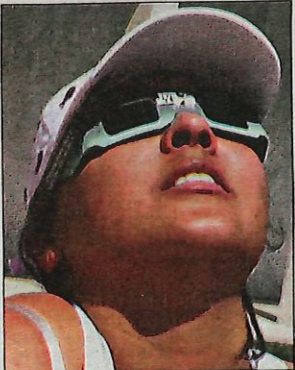
BY DAVID BELCHER  
FOR THE SENTINEL

MOUNT VERNON — You really had to be there.

You really had to be there to fully appreciate the sight of sunny Southern Illinois skies being darkened Monday due to a total solar eclipse, nicknamed the Great North American Solar Eclipse.

A total solar eclipse occurs when the moon travels between the

Please see **Cedarhurst**, Page 2A



Sentinel Photo/DAVID BELCHER

**ECLIPSE DAY** — Wearing eclipse glasses to protect her eyes from



# Eclipse:

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"It's unbelievably different because you see the corona of the sun, which is like the crown of the sun is what they call it, and everything gets dark, the animals start thinking it's night time, it's just a totally different experience. It's otherworldly and it's well worth traveling for," Rodriguez said.

One of the people with Rodriguez was Shane McDonald of O'Fallon, who also expressed excitement about viewing the eclipse.

"Just watching it and being in the moment and experiencing just a wonder of creation," McDonald said.

Another popular spot in Mount Vernon to watch the eclipse was C.E. Brehm Memorial Public Library, which hosted a viewing party starting at 12:30 p.m. Monday. Jeff Martinson and his wife, Sue, were among those outside the library to view the eclipse.

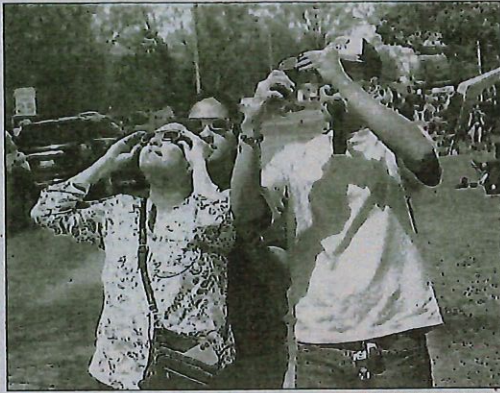
"We live in Wisconsin and we timed our return from Florida and Georgia with a stop here to catch the totality," Jeff said, later adding, "There's no shortage of people who rave about the natural experience it represents, so I want to experience it based upon all (of) that recommendation."

Mount Vernon Outland Airport also held a homecoming event on Monday for pilots who have participated in aviation events, but along with that the general public was allowed to come to the parking lot areas and around the airport lake to watch the eclipse.

"We saw (an eclipse) in '17. I was impressed at how spectacular it was then," said Richard Allan of Belleville, who came to the airport with his wife Mary. "It was amazing to me."

Also at the airport was Rich Gates from Minneapolis, Minnesota. He said that he and his wife are storm chasers and he really wanted to see the eclipse.

"It's the closest to totality that I figure I could get without being with like 200,000 people," Gates said of choosing to stop in Mount Vernon. He added of the totality of the eclipse, "It's three minutes and forty seconds (which) is still quite a long



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

**WATCHING THE ECLIPSE — Mount Vernon was in totality for a little over three minutes during Monday's solar eclipse. Pictured are people watching the eclipse from Veterans Memorial Park.**

time. I saw the 2017 one but it was only 92 percent, which was still cool but I wanted to get 100 percent."

John Dries and his wife Andi, from Wisconsin, also came to the airport to view the eclipse with their friends, Steve and Peggy Frank from Milwaukee.

"If it hadn't been for our friends, Steve and Peggy, I probably wouldn't have bothered coming down, but I'm glad we did," John Dries said. "I enjoy photography and this is something I haven't tried."

In addition, Cedarhurst Center for the Arts hosted a number of activities leading up to the solar eclipse, including "Sun, Moon and Art: Family Fun with the Eclipse," an arts and crafts event for kids on Saturday. Also on Saturday, Cedarhurst held a dual lecture about the eclipse featuring Dr. Kenneth Sembach and Susanna Widicus Weaver, and then on Sunday held a special concert featuring pianist Mark Valenti. The activities culminated Monday with a Total Eclipse Watch Party.

"The solar eclipse gives an opportunity for us to introduce Cedarhurst to visitors maybe that aren't familiar with us outside of our area, but also to encourage our community to come and celebrate this momentous weekend with us," said Cedarhurst Director of Education Jennifer Sarver.

Ryan and Amy Long of Mount Vernon brought their

children Athena and Tristan to Saturday's Cedarhurst craft event. They both expressed excitement about the event and Monday's eclipse.

"We're super excited for it. I mean it's potentially a once-in-a-lifetime event," Amy Long said. Ryan Long then added, "And it's good for the community. It's going to bring people in from all over to come see it."

Carol Baril of Mount Vernon attended Saturday's "Sun, Moon and Art" event with her granddaughter Kayleigh Johnson. Baril said that activities like the ones Saturday and the eclipse itself are great ways to introduce young kids to science.

"Because we're in the totality, we're going to have lots of visitors, I hope, and events like this will just show off the best face of Mount Vernon," Baril said.

Monday's partial eclipse began in earnest at around 12:44 p.m. Monday and complete totality was reached at around 2:02 p.m. and lasted for a little over three minutes. During totality, the sun was pretty much completely covered and the day turned into night, causing street lights to come on. The crowd that had gathered at Veterans Park for the eclipse erupted in applause when totality was reached.

Specific figures were not available Monday on how many visitors Mount Vernon saw from the eclipse. [tmorse@morningsentinel.com](mailto:tmorse@morningsentinel.com)

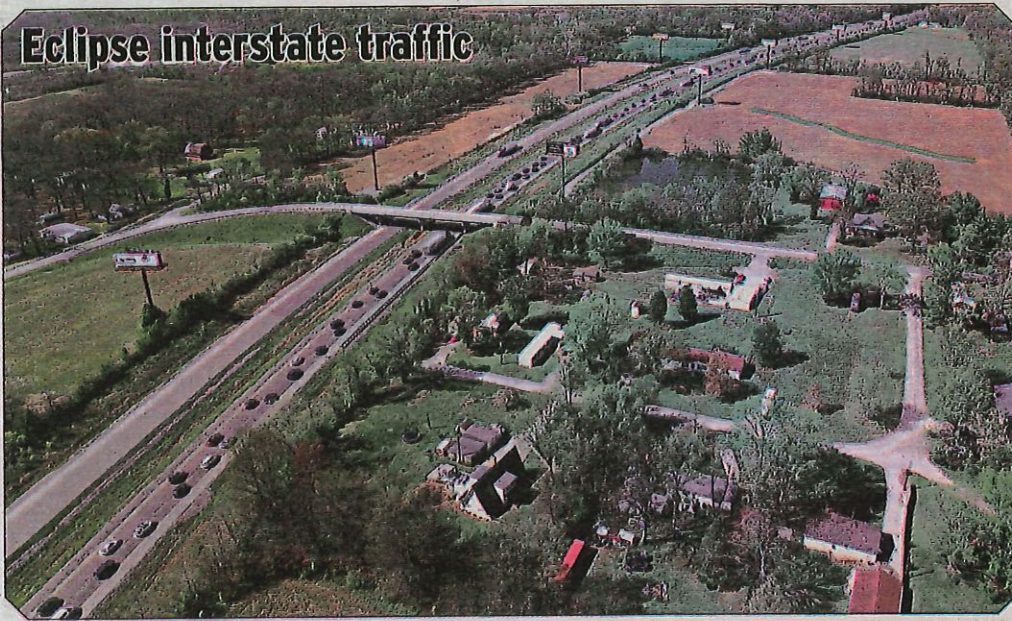


Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

Mount Vernon Outland Airport proved to be a prime location Monday for viewing the solar eclipse.



### Eclipse interstate traffic



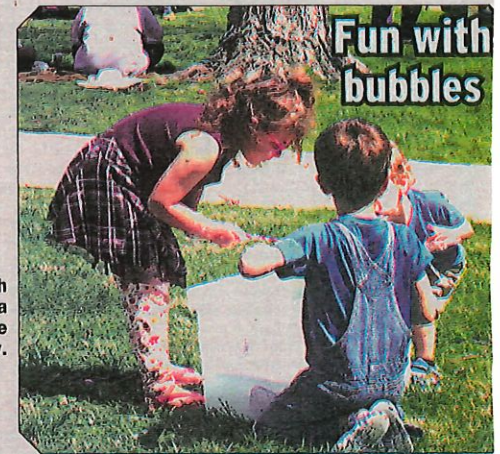
Submitted Photo/BOB FRAKES

Traffic on northbound Interstate 57 near Mount Vernon was busy two hours after the eclipse. Many tourists visited southern Illinois over the weekend and Monday to be in the optimal path of the eclipse.



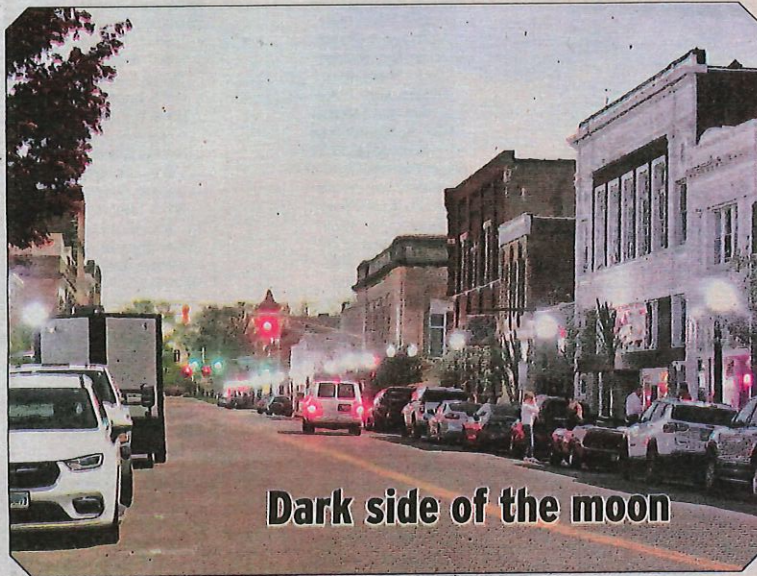
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Residents at GreenTree at Mt. Vernon enjoyed an eclipse party and viewing the phenomenon on Monday afternoon. GreenTree is an assisted living and memory care facility located at 208 Zachery Dr. in Mount Vernon.



Sentinel Photo/JO AL

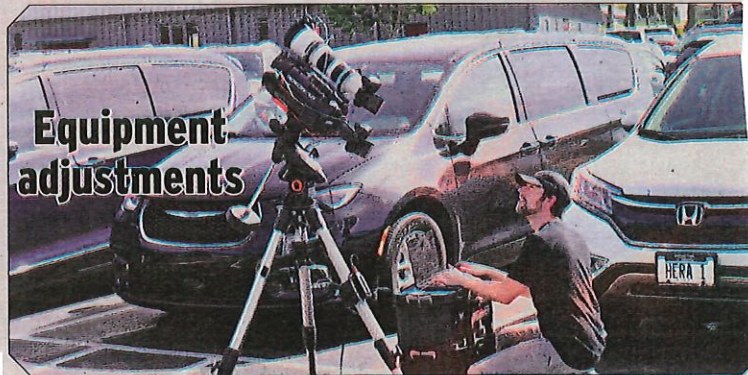
Young children play with bubbles at the Centalla Regional Library during the Total Solar Eclipse Monday.



Sentinel Photo/JO ALLEN

### Dark side of the moon

Downtown Centalla street lights flickered on during the total eclipse on Monday. Daytime could still be seen in the distance, but the Centalla area was cast in the moon's shadow at 2:01 p.m.



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MOR

Justin Foley, from California, makes some adjustments to his photographic equipment at Veterans Park prior to Monday's solar eclipse.