

East Longmeadow fireworks may fizzle
by Erika Leigh

EAST LONGMEADOW—A storied display and a yearly event for families in the lower Pioneer Valley, the July 4 fireworks could be sizzling, or dissolve before they're even launched.

Because of damp weather the last two years, the carnival that also comes to town during the long weekend suffered, raising just a fraction of the revenue needed in order for the light spectacle to happen.

"For the last couple of years, the weather has just been bad that we couldn't make the revenue back to pay for the fireworks," said Krista Callahan, a member of the East Longmeadow Jaycees, who donates the annual display and carnival.

"The fireworks this past year cost nearly \$18,000. We [the Jaycees] do not receive funding from the town or the state, so the police are not provided for the events. We have to pay for them too."

Last year's event billed \$11,000 for police protection. The Jaycees also pay the fire department to be on standby, which cost nearly \$3,000. Callahan explained that the Jaycees additionally foot the bill for the electricity for the carnival.

Because of the lack of funding, the organization has set up a GoFundMe page, mostly being marketed through its Facebook page. The Jaycees are hoping to raise \$15,000 to pay exclusively for a "scaled back" fireworks show and Callahan says her mission is personal.

"In the 1980's, my dad was the president of the Jaycees and so was my uncle at one point," Callahan explained. "My son is almost two and I have two stepdaughters who are going to be eight this year. I want them to have what I did growing up here."

Maureen Bisini, who has been on the committee for the East Longmeadow Jaycees for more than 20 years, explained that the Jaycees are counting on the community to help.

"Last year's carnival, we lost our biggest night to rain. So, we really need people in the community to support to raise the money, so we can continue the annual tradition," she said.

Bisini estimates that more than 30,000 local residents come to watch the fireworks each year. If just half of them donate a dollar each, the Jaycees will exceed their goal, since the company they purchase their fireworks from has offered to match their funds up to \$7,500. Bisini said they are still \$6,000 short with the event less than two months away.

To donate to the campaign, you can visit www.gofundme.com/SavetheELfireworks or visit Maureen's Sweet Shoppe at 6 Center Square in East Longmeadow.