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Fall 2026

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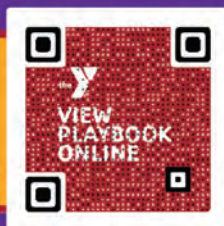
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Learning about leadership

Middle school students gather in Springfield to learn from Lincoln's five pillars of leadership

CC PARENT | Lynn Whalen

Honesty. Integrity. Humility.
Perseverance. Empathy.

Nineteen middle school students from across Illinois spent June 21-26 in Springfield immersed in Abraham Lincoln's five pillars of leadership as part of the LEAD: Spirit of Lincoln Youth Leadership Academy. Learning from Lincoln scholars and reenactors, mentors and each other – and through visits to historic Lincoln sites – the students developed individual plans outlining how they could lead in their own schools and communities.

The Looking for Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area has hosted LEAD since 2016. This year, the program partnered with the Center for Lincoln Studies at the University of Illinois Springfield, which collaborated on the curriculum and provided housing, and the Lincoln Academy of Illinois, which invited its past Lincoln Laureate honorees to serve as mentors to the students.

"We recruit seventh to ninth grade youth to spend a week with us on the UIS campus to learn about personal leadership through the lens of Lincoln as a leader," said Sarah Watson, CEO of Looking for Lincoln. "We recruit through 4-H and mentoring groups like Frontiers International to invite youth (we call them emerging leaders) who might not otherwise get a leadership academy opportunity. Each emerging leader goes home with their own leadership plan."

The emerging leaders were divided into small groups, with two mentors working with each group. Throughout the week as they visited historic sites in and around Springfield, they were asked to jot down in their journals evidence of the five pillars of leadership.

LEAD participant Rosalee Davis of Springfield, who will enter the ninth grade at Southeast High School this fall, recognized honesty and perseverance in



Middle school students from around the state gathered at University of Illinois Springfield on June 21 for the first day of the LEAD: Spirit of Lincoln Youth Leadership Academy. PHOTO BY ZACH ADAMS

several Lincoln stories.

"I've seen a lot of honesty from Abraham Lincoln, like when he returned a book he had borrowed from a farmer and worked off his debt for ruining the book, and perseverance with him not giving up on the Emancipation Proclamation," she said. Davis was elected student council president at her school and plans to continue to "help out within my school community."

Greta Dickison, a rising eighth-grader at Carlinville Middle School, said she learned about the importance of communication and perseverance in

leadership. "When Lincoln started out, his family was pretty poor," she said. "He taught himself the ABCs and to read by age 9, and he just kept pushing. He failed at six jobs, but he eventually made it to be the president of the U.S."

Dickison said when she is old enough, she would like to become president of her 4-H club and continue to serve her community.

Eight of the 10 mentors in this year's LEAD program were past Lincoln Laureates. Claire Manning, chair of the Next Generation Leadership Committee that oversees the Lincoln Laureate

program, said that each year the program recognizes college-age leaders in the university systems of Illinois.

"We have been looking recently for other opportunities for them in terms of leadership in the style of Abraham Lincoln, so the partnership with the LEAD program was a good marriage," Manning said.

Jordan Werner of Huntley is a past Lincoln Laureate who served as a LEAD mentor this year. A 2025 graduate of Benedictine University in Lisle, she currently is pursuing a doctorate in physics at the University of California, Berkely. She said she loved the opportunity to learn from the LEAD students.

"I think of myself at 13 or 14 years old, and I'm just blown away with how mature and introspective, how confident and self-assured they are, and how willing they are to jump in with a bunch of people they don't know and learn," Werner said.

A lifelong Illinois resident, Werner said she herself learned a lot about Lincoln through the program.

"I've never come to Springfield and done the Lincoln home or the Capitol, so I've loved being able to learn from Lincoln's hometown and all of the historical sites," she said.

Another past Lincoln Laureate, Daniel McLaurin of Chicago is a graduate of the University of St. Francis in Joliet and now is a school social worker. He said mentoring the LEAD students was a great opportunity to gain youth leadership experience.

"I love guiding and having the opportunity to raise up future leaders," he said. "At the adolescent age, a big conflict is identity versus role confusion, and they battle constantly feeling superior and inferior. But for them to navigate in those five pillars – empathy, integrity, perseverance, humility and honesty – amongst each other while also learning from the mentors is a huge blessing."

The partnership between Looking for Lincoln and UIS has been in the planning stages for the past two years, according to Jake Friefeld, director of the UIS Center for Lincoln Studies.

"Our mission at the Center is to share and study the legacy of Lincoln's life,

his era and his legacy," Friefeld said. "We really wanted to get into youth programming, and I think LEAD is going to be a really good program for us and Looking for Lincoln for years to come."

And what can the students learn from Lincoln that's relevant to them in today's world?

"We're living in Lincoln's world; he developed the American democracy, a more pluralistic democracy than had existed before," Friefeld said. "We try to reach the kids through his ideals, such as empathy. It's important to be able to step into someone else's experience and try to understand, which Lincoln showed time and time again during his presidency."

Pat Cain is in his first year as director of LEAD, having worked for several years with Looking for Lincoln on various projects. He serves as archives manager for the Champaign County Historical Archives and is a former history teacher at Riverton High School. Cain said the partnerships LEAD has formed has bolstered the program's curriculum.

"The Center for Lincoln Studies offers access to top-tier Lincoln scholars and resources while ensuring the program's long-term sustainability," he said. "We are also excited to partner with the Lincoln Academy. Their Lincoln Laureates are top young scholars from around the state who serve as mentors and role models for our emerging leaders throughout the week."

Watson said the group hopes to make the LEAD curriculum available to other groups around state and country, so they can engage emerging leaders in their own areas. She emphasized that the program is focused on leadership skills development – not on placing Lincoln on a pedestal.

"We're not saying he was this incredible leader, and everyone should follow him," she said. "We're saying, here were his pillars of leadership, those foundations he used as a leader, and we ask the students to think about what they are they going to do to become a leader, what's that first step for them. We talk about all aspects of leadership, the good parts and how hard it is."

"So it's not civics and government we're talking about; it's personal leadership." □



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Does back to school equal back to tech?

Local educators, parents push for boundaries to ensure technology enhances, not undermines, education

CC PARENT | Pamela Savage

Back-to-school shopping lists traditionally have included fresh pencils, new notebooks and colored folders. However, recently parents have noticed tech accessories such as headphones and chargers showing up on their school supply lists.

As a necessity during the pandemic, many schools moved away from textbooks, worksheets and workbooks and toward using “1:1” devices such as laptops and tablets. “One-to-one,” or 1:1, means a school or district provides every student with their own dedicated electronic device.

During the 2024-2025 school year, around 88 percent of public schools had a 1:1 computing program, according to the Institute of Education Sciences. Educational Technology, or EdTech for short, in schools is now a significant part of students’ educational experience, and that brings with it many issues for a community to consider.

Earlier this year, the Education Week Research Center surveyed 596 district and school leaders, and more than half — 61 percent — said that most parents and caregivers feel that there is too much technology in schools and that the addition of EdTech into classrooms has had negative effects on students’ social-emotional skills, overall mental health and classroom behavior.

According to surveyed teachers and school leaders, EdTech did increase student engagement and content mastery slightly. However, these improvements were minimal and came with increased concerns about impacts on students’ attention spans and their online privacy.



CREDIT: ADOBE STOCK

Meaning, yes, children are probably more excited to learn math through a gamified app than via a worksheet (good teachers already know this and can create meaningful engagement without relying on tech), and sure, generative learning tools can quickly discern where a student’s understanding is lacking (again, a skill good teachers possess without turning to a tablet), but these apps and artificial intelligence tools also are decreasing students’ attention spans and collecting data that is in turn either sold or stored without a family’s knowledge — and that is a big business that schools and parents need to know about.

Locally, both educators and parents are taking steps to tackle this issue. Alicia Klug, the principal of Trinity Lutheran School, and Ashley Vincent, local parent and advocate with Wait Until 8th (an organization that encourages parents to

wait until the end of eighth grade to give their children a smartphone), recently shared recommendations concerning EdTech and how families should approach going back to school with technology.

Klug said she seeks to integrate technology in the classrooms at Trinity so that it is enhancing learning and not undermining it. Klug and her colleagues noticed that with 1:1 devices, middle school students might be inclined to rush through an assignment in order to have time to use their tablet to play a game or message friends. In response, Trinity has decided to scale back on 1:1 devices in its middle school, opting instead for a cart of shared laptops that students can use as needed and then return to the teacher.

The goal is for students to do more thorough work on their assignments and then use any free time they might have to

draw, engage with peers, or read physical books — all of which can be better options than a gaming app.

Vincent also is pushing back against the widespread use of school-issued technology. She said she noticed a change in her elementary-aged student within about a month of starting school. Suddenly, her child wanted to be on a school-issued device more and more, and while he was playing so-called “educational” apps, those apps were actually restrictive and disruptive to his routine, she said.

Vincent noticed the draw of this particular form of EdTech was too strong for her young children and that it was cutting into time playing outside with friends, as well as increasing some challenging behaviors.

When she spoke to other parents in her community, they also were troubled by the changes they saw in their children. Vincent is now among a group of local parents who believe any EdTech used by their children’s schools ought to be vetted to ensure it is actually supportive

of students’ learning and has the potential to produce a unique outcome or develop a high-level skill.

Both Klug and Vincent agree that the roll out of EdTech has been quick and that it can seem like an overwhelming monolith, but it is not. Parents, schools and community members have the ability to champion meaningful changes.

On a micro level, Klug recommends concerned parents speak with their school leadership. She also recommends setting reasonable boundaries around tech in the home so that those skills translate to school. One idea Klug supports is sitting down with your child and collaboratively designing a schedule for free time at home, rather than leaving it up to guesswork (because a “bored” kid is more likely to ask for a screen than an engaged one).

“I think it is OK to have time for technology, but it shouldn’t be the first choice,” Klug said. Modeling the best use of tech in the home can have a profound effect on how students manage their own tech in the classroom and beyond, she said.

On a macro level, more and more parents are concerned with EdTech’s addictive qualities, and Vincent recommends that communities join together to petition for change. Whether it’s joining a local Wait Until 8th chapter, speaking to teachers, or putting themselves in front of school board members, parents are poised to have a say in the overall conversation about what types of technology children are exposed to in the local school systems. Fortunately, in central Illinois many communities seem to agree that collective action around the problematic aspects of EdTech is useful and worth considering.

“I am really optimistic because I am starting to see other school administrators, teachers and parents wanting to go back to more traditional forms of learning,” Klug said. “There are a lot of people putting their brains together to work on this issue and to help find more balance.” □

Pamela Savage is a freelance writer and parent living in Springfield.



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Thinking is part of the learning journey

Illinois State Board of Education's new AI guidelines miss the mark

CC PARENT | Melissa Hostetter

Earlier this month, the Illinois State Board of Education released guidance on artificial intelligence for Illinois schools. The guidelines are needlessly complicated, repetitive and lacking substance. In a bit of self-parody, ISBE readily admitted to using AI to construct the 409-page word salad.

The phrase, “teaching and learning are shaped by human relationships and by the experiences, interests, and

assets each child brings into school,” can be found eight times throughout the document. If this is the case, then the nexus of our instruction should reside with dedicated teachers and students. However, once you begin to dig in, this guiding light seems little more than lip service.

Many of the report’s recommendations suggest that AI will make teaching easier. For a Read-

Aloud/Picture/Text Evidence lesson, the guide suggests that in order to help students recall which words they hear during a read-aloud, the teacher could use ChatGPT to “generate 5–8 target words with kid-friendly definitions + gestures; create picture + word cards and word-only cards for differentiation.”

This is a great idea. Teaching vocabulary is an important part of literacy. However, what is the teacher’s

role in this scenario? Anyone can read a book out loud. The teacher's job is to read the book in advance, consider their specific students and their vocabulary needs, and then create a lesson to match. ChatGPT cannot take individual student needs into consideration. Only an educator can do that.

As the document moves into suggestions for high school lessons, it frequently suggests that students complete part of the lesson with AI and then finish on their own.

"AI may brainstorm counterclaims and improve structure. Students must write in their own voice, cite sources, and disclose AI assistance," the guidance recommends.

This suggests we offer our students what is essentially a "homework machine" to complete part of an assignment and then tell them to close the laptop and compose the remainder on their own. If left to their own devices, most high school students (and most adults) would not be able to resist the one-click pull of automatic assignment completion.

Additionally, the guidelines suggest that students can turn over brainstorming and planning to AI so students can "enter tasks faster and spend more time revising and refining work." Brainstorming and planning are part of the writing process. In fact, I spent a fair amount of time doing both to construct this piece. How does it help students to offload cognitive tasks to a machine? Why do we want a machine to work for us? To create for us? Thinking is part of the learning journey.

While perusing this document, I wondered why the Illinois State Board of Education is supporting and promoting a technology that works to replace teachers and degrade learning and thinking? It may be hard to imagine, but this future has arrived in some cities. "Sally," the first humanoid robot, will debut as a teaching assistant in a New York school this fall.

Alpha School is an "AI-powered school where kids crush academics in two hours, build life skills through workshops, and thrive beyond the classroom." Sounds pretty great on the surface. Instead of teachers, Alpha

School employs "guides." These people are often hired from the tech world and are paid six-figure salaries (tuition starts at \$40,000 a year). It is hard to imagine two hours of instruction from an AI tutor would be adequate for most students.

What school districts do need is more guidance and support around building stronger foundational skills. A major area of concern in Illinois is math. The Illinois Report Card indicates that only 38% of students in grades 3-8 scored 'proficient' on the 2025 IAR assessment. Our students are missing foundational skills such as number sense, automatic recall of math facts and the ability to read and understand word problems. The easiest way to address these issues is through hands-on activities involving manipulatives, flashcards, illustrations and real-life examples, such as telling time and playing "store" in the classroom. No devices needed.

The common sentiment around artificial intelligence is not positive. Tangential issues, such as data center construction and predicted job losses, do not bring joy or hope to our society. There seems to be an ongoing disconnect between those in the corporate suites and those of us who do the work, day in and day out. Did ISBE seek parent, student, or teacher opinions? Did it hold a public hearing or listening tour as is typical for recommendations of this magnitude?

ISBE, please revise these guidelines. You have an opportunity to choose a human-centered education system for our children over a simulacrum. You can choose to turn away from the not-so-subtle corporate influence. Technology companies seek lifelong customers. Our commitment as educators is to our students, not the success of the next start-up. We can break the spell of inevitability. □

Melissa Hostetter is a middle school teacher in Springfield. She is a member of the Screens and Schools Working Group, a committee organized by Fairplay and its Screen Time Action Network. Fairplay is calling for a five-year pause on generative AI products in PreK-12 schools.

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Everyday experiences become learning tools

Local children's author Jennifer Waters publishes workbooks to help kids

CC PARENT | Karen Ackerman Witter



PHOTO COURTESY JENNIFER WALTERS

Jennifer Waters has devoted her life to helping children and families. A children's author and sole proprietor of Novel Tea Publishing, she writes books designed to help children build both practical knowledge and confidence through everyday experiences.

For example, she recently published a book designed around making the kitchen a safe learning environment for children. *Learn to Read Activity Workbook: Knowledge in the Kitchen* is now one of her most popular books, earning a spot on Amazon's Top 10,000 books.

"Children often learn best when education connects to familiar experiences," Waters said. "My goal is to keep each lesson visually simple, engaging and approachable, so children can focus on learning without becoming overwhelmed."

Waters said children are naturally curious, and curiosity can lead to a safety concern or valuable learning opportunity. Her goal for *Knowledge in the Kitchen* was to create a resource that encourages parents to make the kitchen a place where children safely build confidence, practical skills and healthy lifelong habits.

Topics in the workbook include how to set a table, measuring tools, how to use an oven and stove, reading directions, storing food, washing hands, food safety, washing dishes, fire safety, staying safe in the kitchen, reading food labels and much more. The book even explains and demonstrates the Heimlich maneuver.

Sprinkled throughout the workbook

are activities such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, true/false questions and drawing prompts. The workbook teaches reading and identify words related to food and kitchen items and includes a section on cooking verbs. At the end there is a quiz, along with a certificate of completion.

Waters describes her books as visual reference workbooks. To date she has self-published 24 workbooks. In addition to *Knowledge in the Kitchen*, her other top sellers are *Counting Money* and *Telling Time*. Most of Waters' books are targeted at ages 7 to 10, with a few designed for younger children. She currently has five more in the works – *Creative Art Skills*, *Everyday Life Skills*, *Practical Consumer Skills*, *Thinking Skills* and *Soft Skills*.

"Each workbook focuses on a different area of practical learning while sharing the same educational philosophy of connecting learning with everyday life," Waters said. She intends to expand into books targeted at teenagers in the future.

Waters said she turned to writing due to life-changing medical issues, and while her medical issues are part of her story, they don't define her story.

As a single mom with two children under the age of 2, she faced numerous challenges. After working a variety of jobs, she fell into the field of education. As a para-professional, she tutored in Riverton during the summer months. In the Riverton and Ball-Chatham school districts, she helped in general and special education roles, served as a study hall teacher and was a security monitor. Through these opportunities to engage with children and families, she discovered her passion for youth and education.

She went on to become the director of education at a Springfield-area Sylvan Learning Center and volunteered as a Sangamon County Court Appointed Special Advocate for children, which gave her the opportunity to see children in many different environments. She also became certified as a mediator.

In 2019 she faced debilitating health

issues that had a profound impact on her life, even limiting her ability to walk and talk. However, she never gave up. As her children, who are now 19 and 20, were getting ready to graduate from high school, she was seeking a new purpose for her days, and that's when she decided to write children's books. Her mission through her writing is to create resources that nurture the whole child in the mind, heart and home.

For privacy and safety reasons and to keep her personal and professional life and social media separate, she publishes under the pseudonym Genevieve Steinhart. Genevieve is inspired by a combination of her given name and childhood nickname. Steinhart is a combination of the name of the doctor who helped her regain her quality of life, along with a representation of power and strength.

Writing children's books has allowed Waters to find joy, and she now thrives by continuing her passion to help children and families through her writing. □



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SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT'S

FALL

Activity & Facility Guide

16-Page Special Insert

The Springfield Park District's Activity & Facility Guide is your go-to source for programs, events, and facility information. It makes it easy to find fun recreation opportunities for all ages throughout the season.

This guide is also available in an interactive online format, allowing readers to click directly to program details and registration pages.

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SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT

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MIN/MAX: 10/24

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270103-02	10-25	M-F	7:30a-5:30p	6/14-6/18	\$50/\$100
270104-03	10-25	M-F	7:30a-5:30p	6/21-6/25	\$50/\$100
270105-04	10-25	M-F	7:30a-5:30p	6/28-7/02	\$50/\$100
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11:00am - 4:00pm *Or while supplies last

Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon, 1740 W Fayette Ave | For more info: carillon-rees.org



The Springfield Park District and Rees Carillon Society Present

JACK O' LANTERN SPECTACULAR!

There will be food vendors on site during the Jack O' Lantern Spectacular!
Come out for beautiful illuminated pumpkins.

OCTOBER 16 & 17
6:30pm - 9:30pm | Both Nights - Rain or Shine

Visit carillon-rees.org for future information
regarding ticket pricing and parking.



Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon, 1740 W Fayette Ave | For more info: carillon-rees.org

SPRINGFIELD PARC^X2026 CYCLOCROSS

Helmets are
required at all times.

Event will go on
rain or shine.

OCTOBER 24

Everyone is invited to participate or come out and watch this exciting CYCLOCROSS event!
Cyclocross is a unique form of cycling that is a cross between road cycling, mountain biking and steeplechase.

Note: Men & Women ALL Categories; staggered start times as dictated by attendance; mountain bikes welcome!

10:00a Masters 40+ 45 min

11:00a Juniors 9-17, CAT 4/5, First-Timers 40 min

12:00p CAT 3 45 min

1:00p CAT 1/2 60 min



Online Registration is:
\$35 +Bike Registration Fee
Register at:
[BikeReg.com/springfield-cyclocross](https://www.bikereg.com/springfield-cyclocross)



Located at Centennial Park 5529 Bunker Hill, Springfield, IL
For more information, please contact Scott Marlow 217-546-4103 ext. 1012

SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT



**FINANCIAL
SCHOLARSHIPS
AVAILABLE!**

Please call
217-544-1751 for
more info.

REGISTER NOW FOR

Preschool In The Park!



The Springfield Park District invites you to enroll your child in our Preschool in the Park program for the 2026-2027 school year!

Classes are mixed with 3, 4, & 5 years old.

TWO DAY... THREE DAY... & FIVE DAY OPTIONS!



Sign up now at
bit.ly/SPD_Preschool-Park

Or Scan the **QR Code!**

Application due at registration.

TWO DAY – TUE & THUR

9:00 - 11:30 AM

Activity #350950

THREE DAY – MON, WED & FRI

9:00 - 11:30 AM

Activity #350951

12:45 - 3:15 PM

Activity #350953

FIVE DAY – MON thru FRI

9:00 - 11:30 AM

Activity #350952

**Prices will vary based on the number of days per month.*

For more information contact Deb Clark at 217-546-3970 or email at dclark@springfieldparks.org

DISCOVER THE SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT!



SPRINGFIELD
PARK DISTRICT

With **36 parks** and **17 unique facilities**, there's something for everyone!

PARKS

Bergen Park	Jefferson Park
Bunn Park	Kiwanis Park
Carpenter Park	Lake Victoria Park
Centennial Park	Lanphier Park
Comer Cox Park	Lawless Park
Duncan Park	Lincoln Park
Dreamland Park	Lindbergh Park
Eisenhower Park	Cadigan Park
Enos Park	Barker Park
Fairview Park	Riverside Park
Gehrmann Park	Rotary Park
Gietl Park	Schlitt Park
Gurgens Park	Southwind Park
Hobbs Park	Stuart Park
Iles Park	Timberbrooke Park
Indian Hills Park	Vredenburg Park
Jaycee Park	Washington Park
Kennedy Park	Westchester Park

FACILITIES

Henson Robinson Zoo
Washington Park Botanical Garden
Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon
Washington Park Pavilion
Eisenhower Aquatic Center
Riverside Campground
Lincoln Greens Golf Course
Bunn Golf Course
Bergen Golf Course
Pasfield Golf Course
Velasco Tennis Center
Robin Roberts Stadium
Nelson Center Ice Rink
Lincoln Park Pavilion
Nelson Center Pool
Erin's Pavilion
Funshop



Find your next adventure at springfieldparks.org
Or scan the QR Code!



SPRINGFIELD
PARK DISTRICT

UNLOCK THE FUN WITH

Scholarships

**BECAUSE EVERY KID
SHOULD PLAY!**

We believe that every child deserves the chance to explore, learn, and play, regardless of financial circumstances. That's why we're excited to offer **financial scholarships to our residents**, ensuring that no one misses out on the joy of recreation and learning.

Scholarships are available for Springfield Park District residents, making it easier for families to access our diverse range of programs and facilities.

***Please note** that while our scholarships cover a wide range of programs and activities, daily admission, private lessons, and season passes are **not included** in the scholarship program.



For more information about our scholarship program, please go to our website at bit.ly/SPD_Program-Scholarship

Or scan the QR code!

Have questions? Contact registration at recreation@springfieldparks.org

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SPRINGFIELD
PARK DISTRICT

CAPITOL
MEDIA GROUP

SPRINGFIELD ZOOLOGICAL
ZOO
SOCIETY

**\$5
ENTRY**

ZOO LIE Ghoulie

Friday, OCT 23, 1p-8p
Saturday, OCT 24, 11a-6p

WINTER HOLIDAY FLORAL SHOW

DECEMBER 5TH - 20TH

Enjoy 500+ poinsettias nestled among the decorated fresh evergreens and lush tropical foliage.
The event is free and for all ages!

MONDAY-FRIDAY: 12-4P
SATURDAY-SUNDAY: 12:-5P

For more information, please call 217-546-4116

SPRINGFIELD
EST. 1900
PARK DISTRICT
WASHINGTON PARK BOTANICAL GARDEN

EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF SPRINGFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION

From first playdates to family traditions, the Springfield Park District is here for every stage of life and every kind of family. Our parks, facilities, and programs are designed to help everyone explore, learn, and grow, while giving welcoming spaces to connect, relax, and make memories together. Discover how each area of the Springfield Park District offers something special for everyone.



WASHINGTON PARK PRESCHOOL

A joyful first step into learning, Washington Park Preschool blends education and play in a nurturing environment designed for curious little minds. Through hands-on activities focused on STEM, art, movement, and social skills, children ages 3–5 build confidence, creativity, and friendships—while parents enjoy peace of mind knowing their child is learning through play.

SPECIAL RECREATION

The Springfield Park District's Special Recreation programs ensure that everyone belongs. Offering inclusive and adaptive activities for individuals of all abilities, these programs support physical activity, creativity, and social connection in a welcoming environment where children and families can thrive together.



THOMAS REES MEMORIAL CARILLON

Music, history, and wonder come together at the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon. Families can enjoy free live concerts in the park. Kids love the bells and breathtaking views, while adults appreciate the unique cultural experience nestled in Washington Park.



VELASCO TENNIS CENTER

Velasco Tennis Center is where kids can learn new skills and adults can stay active. With lessons and programs for all ages and abilities, families can grow a love for tennis together—whether it's a child's first swing or an adult getting back into the game.



WASHINGTON PARK BOTANICAL GARDEN

A peaceful escape that doubles as a living classroom, the Washington Park Botanical Garden invites families to explore nature up close. Children can discover colorful flowers, towering plants, and tropical environments, while adults can enjoy a calm, beautiful setting perfect for strolling and learning.

AQUATICS AT EISENHOWER & NELSON CENTER POOLS

Summer fun starts at the pool! From open swims and lessons to competitive teams, our aquatics facilities offer something for everyone during the summer months.



ERIN'S PAVILION

Located at Southwind Park, Erin's Pavilion is more than an event space—it's a gathering place for families. From birthday parties to celebrations and community events, this eco-friendly facility offers scenic views and modern amenities in a setting that's both welcoming and memorable.

FUNSHOP

Designed especially for young children and their caregivers, Funshop is where learning meets laughter. Through interactive play focused on creativity, motor skills, and social development, children explore the world around them while parents actively engage and grow alongside them.



GOLF AT LINCOLN GREENS, BERGEN, PASFIELD, AND BUNN GOLF COURSES

Golf is a game the whole family can enjoy. With four unique courses ranging from beginner-friendly to championship-level play, families can introduce kids to the sport, play a round themselves, or simply spend quality time outdoors together.



HENSON ROBINSON ZOO

A favorite destination for families, the Henson Robinson Zoo brings children face-to-face with animals from around the world. With engaging exhibits, educational programs, and seasonal events, the zoo inspires curiosity and conservation while offering parents a fun, walkable, and enriching outing.



ICE SKATING AT THE NELSON CENTER

From first skates to family traditions, the Nelson Center Ice Rink offers year-round fun. Kids can build confidence in Learn to Skate classes, teens can play hockey, and families can enjoy public skating sessions that turn chilly days into unforgettable experiences.





MORE JOY.

Endless discovery awaits for children.

Visit springfieldparks.org to find activities near you, register for preschool, Funshop, lessons, or book celebration rentals. Rediscover your local parks through the eyes of a little one.



Family Fun

Learn and Play



Birthday Parties



Camps and Workshops



Discover & register
today!

KIDS

Find your **FUN**, find your *smile* at springfieldparks.org



PLAY MORE.

Endless recreational opportunities await teens.

Visit springfieldparks.org to find activities near you, register for camps, workshops, lessons or teams, or book a celebration rental. Adventure awaits right outside your door. Rediscover your local parks, lose your phone and find your fun!



Recreational Sports



Leisure Activities



Team Sports



Camps and Workshops



Discover & register
today!

TEENS

Find your **FUN**, find your *smile* at springfieldparks.org



ADVENTURE.

Endless new adventures await adults.

Visit springfieldparks.org to find activities and events near you, register for workshops and lessons, or book rentals. Adventure awaits - create cherished memories at your local parks today!



Family Fun



Leisure Activities



Celebration Rentals



Events and Workshops



Discover & register
today!

ADULTS

Find your **FUN**, find your *smile* at springfieldparks.org

SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT

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PARK DISTRICT

ZOO LIGHTS

AT THE HENSON ROBINSON ZOO

🔦 Stunning Light Displays 🔦 Fun for the Whole Family!

NOV 27TH - DEC 22ND

FRIDAY, SATURDAY, & SUNDAY

5-9pm *last admission is 8pm

ENTRY fee

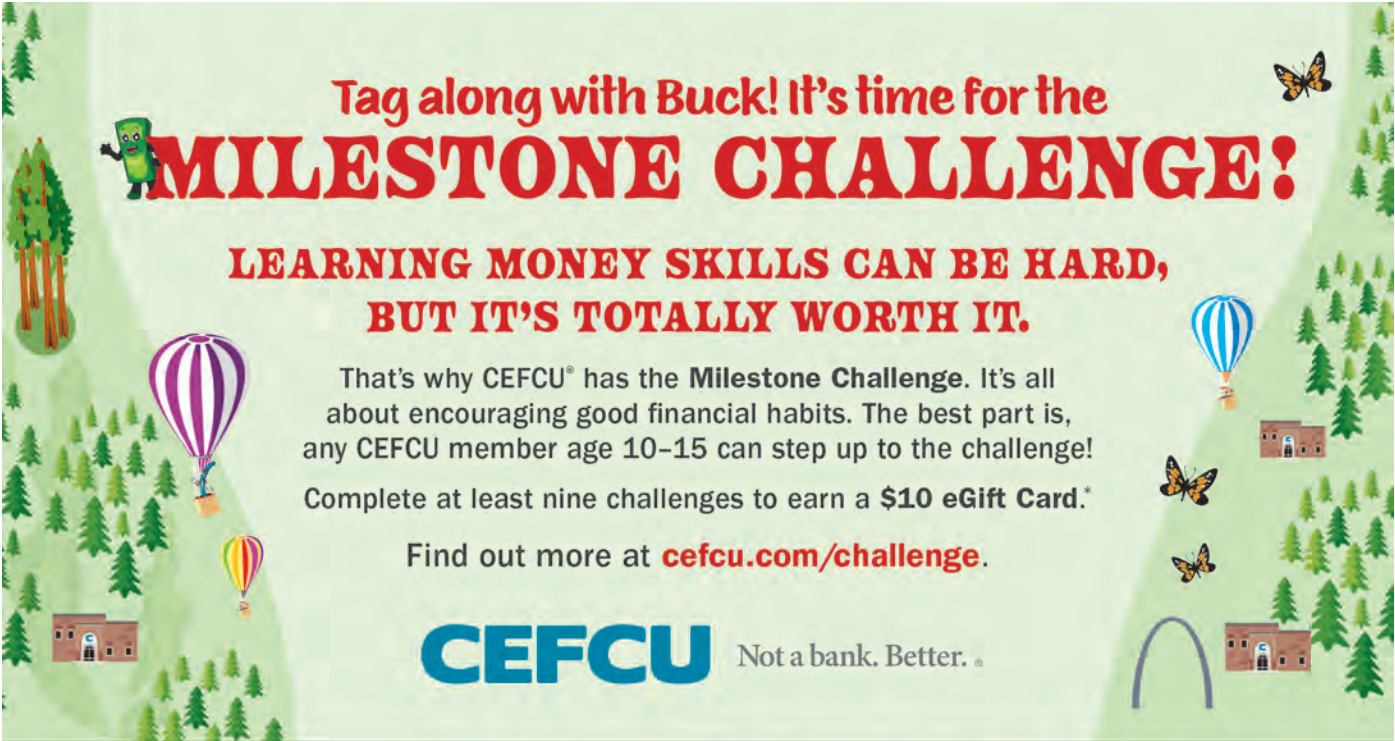
Adults 13-61 - \$7.50

Children 3-12 - \$5.50

Seniors 62+ - \$5.50

Children 2 years and under - FREE





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Open a UCB Savings account and teach your children the responsibility of saving money from an early age.

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2. Your cellular provider's data and text messaging rates may apply.



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Family event calendar

PARENT | Daron Walker

AUGUST

Rumble Fish

Sat., Aug. 8, 7:30pm. This stage version of S.E. Hinton's (author of *The Outsiders*) classic novel explores the themes of gang culture and the search for identity. It tells the story of two brothers, brought up in social deprivation by their alcoholic father. Directed by Mark Buckholz. Theatre in the Park, Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site, Petersburg, 15588 History Lane, 217-725-0239.

Disney's Frozen

Sat., Aug. 8, 8:30pm. A tale of sisterly love and self-discovery. Disney's Frozen melts hearts with its story of courage, compassion and acceptance. Directed by Alyssa and DJ Shultz. themuni.org. \$12-\$30. The Muni, 815 E. Lake Dr., 217-793-6864.

SIX: Teen Edition

Sat., Aug. 8. Six wives of Henry VIII take center stage to reclaim their stories with unforgettable music, incredible choreography, and powerhouse vocals. \$6 balcony/\$10 student or educator/\$15 mezzanine/\$20 orchestra. Lanphier High School, 1300 N. 11th St., 401-935-2817.

The Jungle Book

Sat., Aug. 8, 3-4, 5-6pm. The magic of Rudyard Kipling's beloved classic leaps from the page to the stage in this enchanting children's ballet presented by the Springfield Dance Theatre. Young dancers bring Mowgli, Baloo and the Shere Khan to life with vibrant costumes and an imaginative jungle world. \$25 in advance, \$30 day of show. The Legacy Theatre, 101 E. Lawrence, 217-528-9760.

Estella Chapter No. 3 OES Back to School Giveaway

Sat., Aug. 8, 10am-2pm. Back to School Party and Backpack Giveaway. Free food, vendors, giveaways and a bounce house. Historic Engine House 5, 1310 E. Adams St.

Annual Picnic

Sat., Aug. 8, 4-8pm. Gather for an afternoon filled with great food, fun

activities and fellowship for all ages. Includes food and grilled favorites, bounce house, Free health screenings, music, games and more. Open to public. Free. Fresh Visions Community Church, 1551 J. David Jones Pkwy., 217-726-5988.

Los Angeles vs. San Francisco

Sat., Aug. 8, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Power of Love, Decade of Decadence

Sat., Aug. 8, 7-10:30pm. Power of Love is a Huey Lewis tribute band while show opener Decade of Decadence, from central Illinois, is "the ultimate 80s rock party." \$11 a week in advance, \$15 at gate. Sherman Village Park Amphitheater, Sherman, 1200 Rail Fence Dr., 217-496-2621.

"noir 6: The Truth"

Tuesdays-Saturdays. Through Oct. 16. Black art contributes to a deeper and more inclusive understanding of the American narrative. "noir 6: The Truth" invites audiences to engage, thoughtfully, with the histories and perspectives that shape our shared cultural truths. Old State Capitol State Historic Site, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, 217-785-9363.

"The Road to Adventure: Exploring Route 66"

Wednesdays-Sundays, 9am-4pm. Through Dec. 31. This vibrant, hands-on exhibit brings the magic of the historic Mother Road to life - and it's fun for the whole family. kidzeum.org. \$5-\$12. Kidzeum of Health and Science, 412 E. Adams St., 217-679-2123.

Lincoln Troubadours

Wednesdays-Saturdays, 11:30am-12pm. Through Aug. 8. Listen to the music of Lincoln's day performed by this acapella group. The group performs at several locations as part of the History Comes Alive program. Find a full schedule at the Visit Springfield website. Free. Old State Capitol State Historic Site, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, 217-789-2360.

Abe's 19th-Century Toymaking Workshop

Wednesdays, Saturdays, 1-1:30pm. Through Aug. 8. Abraham Lincoln talks about toys his children played with and invites participants to make their own 19th-century toy. Free. Old State Capitol State Historic Site, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, 217-785-5030.

Elijah Iles House Tours

Saturdays, 12-4pm. Through Nov. 14. Tour the oldest house in Springfield. Groups wishing to tour Springfield's oldest home at other times can call for an appointment. The house was built in 1837 by Iles, one of the city's earliest settlers. Free. Elijah Iles House, 628 S. Seventh St., 217-494-0640.

History Night

Saturdays, 5:30-7pm. Through Aug. 8. Take in two presentations, part of History Comes Alive program. 5:30-6pm: "Custodian of Freedom: William H. Butler's Capitol Tour." Hear the story of William H. Butler, Underground Railroad station master and a delegate to Illinois' first Colored Citizens Convention. 6:30-7pm: "Frederick Douglass, Abolitionist & Orator." Douglass recounts his visit to Springfield one year after Lincoln's assassination. Free. Old State Capitol State Historic Site, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, 217-785-5030.

Edwards Place Historic Home Guided Tours

Tuesdays-Saturdays, 1-2, 2-3pm. Take this guided tour of the first and second floors. The home, interpreted to 1857, is furnished with examples of Victorian furniture including many pieces that belonged to the Edwards family. edwardsplace.org. \$12 adults/ \$10 SAA members, military and seniors.; children younger than 10 free. Edwards Place, Springfield Art Association, 700 N. Fourth St., 217-523-2631.

Celebration Concert

Sun., Aug. 9, 3-4pm. This free concert will feature pieces on organ, violin and other instruments. Springfield area musicians will perform in honor of Trinity's music director and organist, Laura Fliege. Light refreshments will be served after. Free. Trinity Lutheran Church, 220 S. Second St., 217-787-2323.

New York vs. Boston

Sun., Aug. 9, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Rochester Farmers Market

Second Sunday of every month, 12-3pm and Fourth Sunday of every month, 12-3pm. Through Sep. 27. Local produce and products. Rochester Public Library District, Rochester, 1 Community Dr., 217-498-8454.

Learn to Skate at the Nelson Center

Mondays, 6-6:30pm. Through Aug. 24. The Learn to Skate Academy is a progressive program designed to provide kids balance on and off of the ice. A step-by-step progression of skills is taught to develop the student's techniques in an enjoyable and social atmosphere. Register by July 24 at bit.ly/SPD_Ice-ProgrammingNelsonCenter, 1601 N. Fifth St., 217-753-2800.

Kids Fare Garden Club

Mondays, 10-11am. Through Aug. 10. Kids Fare Garden Club offers hands-on gardening as well as garden-related activities. Registration held on site with a cap of 15 children participating. Free. Enos Park Neighborhood Garden, 1022 N. Fifth St., 217-610-0720.

Back to School Walk-in Vaccine Clinic

Wed., Aug. 12, 8:30am-3:30pm. This clinic is presented by Sangamon County Department of Public Health. Parent/Guardian must be present with ID. Must bring student's insurance card. Not sure if your child needs vaccines? Call 217-535-3102. Sangamon County Health Department, 2833 South Grand Ave. E., 217-535-3102.

Storytime & Pop-up Library

Second Wednesday of every month. Through Sept. 30. For infants, toddlers, pre-K. Children and their grownups will explore stories and activities to encourage children to develop a lifelong love of reading and learning. Group meets in grass so bring a blanket or chair to sit on. Lindbergh Park, 2419 Lindbergh Blvd., 217-753-4900.

Los Angeles vs. San Francisco

Wed., Aug. 12, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Illinois State Fair

Aug. 13-Aug. 22. Massive annual fair features every kind of food imaginable, the sounds of music and concertgoers' cheers at the Grandstand shows, a midway, harness-racing events and tons of agricultural shows and more. The fun begins Aug. 13 with the Twilight Parade. Adults \$5, seniors \$3, children 12 and younger free. Illinois State Fairgrounds, 801 Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

Eat A Rainbow! Week 10

Thu., Aug. 13, 10-11am. How do plants and animals beat the heat when it's really hot? How do humans cool down when the temperature rises? Learn heat safety tips and stick around for a homemade popsicle treat.. Free. Enos Park Neighborhood Garden, 1022 N. Fifth St., 217-610-0720.

Boston vs. New York

Thu., Aug. 13, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin

Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Flute Circle

Second Thursday of every month, 1pm. Play flute with the Sangamon Valley Flute Circle. Beginners are encouraged to come, no experience necessary. Feel the healing power of music fill you. unityofspringfieldil.org. Donations accepted. Unity of Springfield, 417 Cordelia, 217-523-5897.

Dual Piano

Fri., Aug. 14, 7pm, Sat., Aug. 15, 7pm and Sun., Aug. 16, 2pm. Damien Kaplan and Mark Gifford will work their magic on your favorite music as only they can. A couple of guys, a couple of grand pianos and a couple of hours of delight - that's Dual Piano. Comedy runs amuck throughout their programs, and no one knows what is going to happen next - including Mark and Damien. hcfta.org. \$20-\$22. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Bailey Zimmerman

Fri., Aug. 14, 8pm. Multi-platinum singer-songwriter Bailey Zimmerman, from Louisville, Illinois, is one of country

music's brightest stars. He's known for his chart-topping hits and authentic gritty sound. \$55-\$130. Illinois State Fair Grandstand, 801 Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

Girls Glory Free Hair Braiding for Kids

Sat., Aug. 15, 10am-3pm. Hair braiding is free. No weave will be added. Arrive with child's hair freshly washed and detangled with a blow dryer. Free. 1908 Innovation & Coworking Center, 1100 South Grand Ave E, 217-741-7312.

Los Angeles vs. Boston

Sat., Aug. 15, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Lainey Wilson

Sat., Aug. 15, 8pm. Country music trailblazer Lainey Wilson has been named Entertainer of the Year, Female Artist of the Year, Album of the Year, and Artist-Songwriter of the Year. Tickets go on sale at 10am Saturday, Nov. 8. Ticketmaster.com. \$88-\$128. Illinois State Fair Grandstand, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

Old-time Community Barn Dance -

Capital City Contra

Third Saturday of every month, 7pm. Enjoy various folk dances to live music performed by Peaches & Bacon. No experience necessary. All dances taught and called. No partner needed. Dress casual and comfortable. Free and family-friendly. Parking and entrance on west side of church. Free, donations of \$5-\$10 accepted. First Presbyterian Church, 321 S. Seventh St., 217-528-4311.

Joseph Rodney: Freedom Seeker on the Illinois Central Railroad

Sun., Aug. 16, 1:30-3pm. Author and historian Darrel Dexter will present "Joseph Rodney: Freedom Seeker on the Illinois Central Railroad." chmoorehomestead.org. Free. C.H. Moore Homestead DeWitt County Museum, Clinton, 219 E. Woodlawn St., 217-935-6066.

Two By Two

Sun., Aug. 16, 6pm. Part of the Concerts in the Park series hosted by the Pilot Club of Jacksonville. Bring lawn chairs and blankets to the Big Bandstand. Jacksonville Community Park, Jacksonville, 1201 S. Main, 217-243-5678.

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Bounce houses,
toddler area,
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games...

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SPRINGFIELD LICE CLINIC FEES AND SERVICES:

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This fee is waived if everyone in your party needs treatment.
- \$125 FOR FIRST HEAD TREATMENT**
- \$100 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL HEAD TREATMENT**
An additional \$25 per head for hair below the shoulders.
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springfieldliceclinic@gmail.com

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Boston vs. New York

Sun., Aug. 16, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Free School Physicals

Tue., Aug. 18, 9am-3pm. Free school physicals for the 2026-7 school year. For those in kindergarten, sixth and ninth grades and children new to district 186. A parent or guardian must be present. Sponsored by Molina and Springfield Clinic. Compass for Kids Office, 1201 S. 4th St.

Illinois in the Revolutionary War

Tue., Aug. 18, 6-7pm. Uncover the daring history of the Revolutionary War in Illinois in this program by Tom Emery. The program will focus on George Rogers Clark and his grueling trek through icy floodwaters to capture Kaskaskia and Vincennes. Chatham Area Public Library, Chatham, 600 E. Spruce St., 217-483-2713.

New York vs. Boston

Thu., Aug. 20, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

The Lion King Jr.

Aug. 20-Feb. 22, 8:30pm. In this special youth production of Disney's The Lion King Jr., join Simba, Nala and friends on a journey of love, responsibility and the circle of life in this timeless family favorite. Directed by Tiffany Williams. themuni.org. \$12-\$30. The Muni, 815 E. Lake Dr., 217-793-6864.

Great Puzzle Race

Fri., Aug. 21, 6-8pm. Gather a team of four and put those puzzle-solving skills to the test in this competition where teams will race against the clock to complete challenging puzzles. For those 12 and older. For more info or to sign up, contact email asablotny@chathamlib.org. Chatham Area Public Library, Chatham, 600 E. Spruce St., 217-483-2713.

San Francisco vs. Los Angeles

Fri., Aug. 21, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Hairspray!

Fri., Aug. 21, 7:30pm, Sat., Aug. 22, 7:30pm, Sun., Aug. 23, 2pm, Fri., Aug. 28, 7:30pm, Sat., Aug. 29, 7:30pm and Sun., Aug. 30, 2pm. It's 1962 in Baltimore, and the lovable plus-size teen, Tracy Turnblad, has only one desire — to dance on the popular "Corny Collins Show." When her dream comes true, Tracy is transformed from social outcast to sudden star. She must use her newfound power to dethrone the reigning Teen Queen, win the affections of heartthrob, Link Larkin, and integrate a TV network... all without denting her 'do! Winner of eight Tony Awards including best musical. hcfta.org. \$21-\$23. Hoogland Center for the Arts LRS Theatre 1, 420 S. Sixth St., 217-523-2787.

Ella Langley

Fri., Aug. 21, 8pm. Ella Langley is a multi-platinum,

chart-topping and award-winning country artist whose unmistakable voice and fearless songwriting have made her one of the genre's most defining stars. statefair.illinois.gov. \$59-\$134. Illinois State Fair Grandstand, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

250 Years of Fashion

Sat., Aug. 22, 1pm. This fashion show spans over two centuries of fashion in America. Models will display these fashions in the parlors of Edwards Place, harkening back to the early days of fashion shows, which took place in the homes of wealthy Parisians. \$15 non-members. \$10 members. Edwards Place, Springfield Art Association, 700 N. Fourth St., 217-523-2631.

New York vs. Los Angeles

Sat., Aug. 22, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Abe's Amble 2025

Sun., Aug. 23, 7:30am. On the last day of the Illinois State Fair in August each year, hundreds of runners from Illinois and surrounding states take to the streets covering the fairgrounds, Lincoln Park, Oak Ridge Cemetery and back. This challenging 10K course is USATF certified. There is also a certified 5K course option. srrc.net. TBA. Illinois State Fair Grandstand, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., 217-782-6661.

Powerlight Fest

Sun., Aug. 23, 2-9pm. Dove Award winner Jordan Feliz will headline the event along with Sean Rodriguez and Ignescence. BYO Church will lead the praise and worship to start the festival at 2pm. Free with admission to fair. The Lincoln Stage, 801 E. Sangamon Ave., 217-553-5271.

Community Summer Band

Sun., Aug. 23, 6pm. Part of the Concerts in the Park series hosted by the Pilot Club of Jacksonville. Bring lawn chairs and blankets to the Big Bandstand. Free. Jacksonville Community Park, Jacksonville, 1201 S. Main, 217-243-5678.

Los Angeles vs. Boston

Sun., Aug. 23, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

SIU Car Seat Checks

Tue., Aug. 25, 11am-1pm. Have your car seat installation checked for safety by the experts at SIU School of Medicine. Free. SIU School of Medicine, Office of Human Resources, 327 W. Calhoun, 217-545-8000.

Prairie Hikes

Last Wednesday of every month, 8-9am. Through Oct. 28. Jamie Arntzen of the Illinois Audubon Society will share her expertise about the plants and species communities during guided monthly walks along the trails of the AWS prairie as it transitions through the seasons. Free. Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, 2315 E. Clear Lake Ave., 217-899-6150.



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Boston vs. Los Angeles

Wed., Aug. 26, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Pedal the Parks Family Bike Series - Aug. 27

Thu., Aug. 27, 6pm. Glow Ride Family Evening Ride. Event designed to give families a safe, beginner-friendly biking opportunity. throughout the summer. Ride begins at 6 pm. Helmets are required for all riders. Lincoln Park, Fifth Street and Sangamon Avenue, 217-544-1751.

Los Angeles vs. New York

Thu., Aug. 27, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

MomCo

Fourth Thursday of every month, 6:30-8:30pm. MomCo is a place where mothers can meet to receive support, make meaningful connections and grow a community. Child care is provided. trinity-lutheran.com. Free. Trinity Lutheran Church Parish Hall, 515 S. MacArthur Blvd., 217-787-2323.

Balloons Over 66 Weekend

Fri., Aug. 28 and Sat., Aug. 29. While there may not be balloons this year, the weekend includes the annual Lincoln Art Fair, dock dogs, vendors, live music and more in the downtown area. Downtown Lincoln, Lincoln, Lincoln.

Scheels Touch-a-Truck

Fri., Aug. 28, 3-6pm. Get ready for a BIG day of hands-on fun as you get up close with the BIGGEST wheels in town! As part of our Back 2 School celebration, join us for an exciting Touch-a-Truck event where kids and families can explore, climb in, and experience real service vehicles firsthand!. Scheels, 3801 S. MacArthur Blvd., 217-726-6330.

Boston vs. San Francisco

Fri., Aug. 28, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

New York vs. Los Angeles

Sat., Aug. 29, 6:30pm. Women's Pro Baseball League action. \$20-\$37. Robin Roberts Stadium, 1415 N. Grand Ave. E., 217-679-3511.

Ice Cream Social Music Series

Sun., Aug. 30, 5pm. An ice cream social like no other! Listen to the sounds of the Land of Lincoln Chorus while enjoying free ice cream. Presented by the Villas of Sherman. Free. Sherman Village Park Amphitheater, Sherman, 1200 Rail Fence Dr., 217-496-2621.

Rob Brogdon

Sun., Aug. 30, 6pm. Part of the Concerts in the Park series hosted by the Pilot Club of Jacksonville. Bring lawn chairs and blankets to the Big Bandstand. Free. Jacksonville Community Park, Jacksonville, 1201 S. Main, 217-243-5678.

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