

TURNING A LEAF

BY MIA JONES

As the days start to get a little cooler and kids are going back to school, there are a variety of fall events across DuPage for everyone to enjoy this year. Whether it's a nature-filled walk or a fundraiser with brewery samples, we've got you covered.

Herrick Lake
Photo courtesy of
DuPage County
Forest Preserve



Boy Barbecue available for purchase. This event will raise money for the Elmhurst History Museum and Churchville One-Room Schoolhouse. Early entry tickets and general admission tickets can be purchased on the website listed above.

Taste of Egypt Festival

St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church in Burr Ridge
September 14, 11 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. and September 15, 12 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
tasteofegyptfestival.com

Attend the annual Taste of Egypt festival - a weekend full of food, camel rides, inflatables, art, jewelry, crafts, and more. Spend the day perusing authentic Egyptian souvenirs, and jewelry at Nefertiti's Treasures. King Tut's Kingdom will excite every child with face painting and crafts.

Elmhurst Craft Beer Fest

Elmhurst History Museum
September 14, 2-6 p.m.
(early entry starts at 1 p.m.)
elmhurstcraftbeerfest.com

The Elmhurst Heritage Foundation will hold its 9th annual Elmhurst Craft Beer Fest on Saturday, September 14, on the grounds of the Elmhurst History Museum. Come enjoy samples of many craft brews, meads, ciders, seltzers, and live music from the bands Live Stream and Lake Effect. There will also be food from Golden

Camel rides and a petting zoo along with live music make for a fun family day. Free admission and parking.

Halloween Window Painting and Downers Grove Historical Society Living Cemetery

Downtown Downers Grove
October 26

downtowndg.org

Hosted by Downers Grove Downtown Management Corp & the Rotary Club of Downers Grove, start off the day painting spooky windows in downtown Downers Grove from 9 a.m. - noon. Bring a food donation for the Downers Grove FISH Pantry in exchange for paints at 933A Curtiss Street. Paints are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Make sure to bring paintbrushes for Halloween fun. Between 10 a.m. and noon, take a walk back through time at Main Street Cemetery to see 'guest' actors portray early Downers Grove settlers. The actors will share the early settlers' life stories and the colonial

days of Downers Grove. This is a once-a-year opportunity, and free admission to the public!

Oak Brook Halloween Trick-or-Treat Trail

Central Park West
October 5, 2-5 p.m.

obparks.org

Come dressed in costume and ready to trick-or-treat for the Oak Brook Halloween Trick or Treat Trail! First, venture through the woods on the trick-or-treat trail, where many fun characters will be waiting in Halloween spirit. Once at the end of the trail, board the Haunted Wagon for a spooky ride around the park. There will also be a pumpkin patch, bouncy houses, and arts and crafts. Admission costs are as follows: 17 years and older are \$8, children 2-16 years old are \$18, and children under two years old are free. More information can be found on Oak Brook Parks website above.

Abbey Farms

Aurora

abbeyfarms.org

Visit Abbey Farms this fall for their new up-and-coming apple orchard! The first apples are planned to be available for picking this fall! Information on sponsoring an apple tree can be found on Abbey Farms' website. Additionally, Abbey Farms' Pumpkin Daze will be running September 21-October 27. Pumpkin Daze is the perfect fall farm adventure, packed with activities such as a weekend petting zoo, the pumpkin patch, a tractor/hay wagon ride, and a corn maze! More information about park hours can be found on Abbey Farms' website.

Herrick Lake Fall Foliage

Wheaton

dupageforest.org

Pay a visit to Herrick Lake this fall to get a glimpse of some gorgeous fall foliage. Located in Wheaton, the changing leaves create a stunning reflection on Herrick Lake. The park is open from one hour after sunrise to one hour after sunset. There are more than seven miles of trails, and a path around the lake connects both parking lots to the picnic grounds and the trailhead. Warrenville Grove and St. James Farm, two other beautiful spots to observe the fall season, are located nearby Herrick Lake.



The Forge Trail Run Festival
Photo courtesy
of The Forge:
Lemont Quarries

The Forge Trail Run Festival

The Forge: Lemont Quarries
November 2, 8 a.m.

forgeparks.com

Multiple autumnal running events will take place at The Forge: Lemont Quarries on Saturday, November 2, including a 4 mile (ish), 10K, 20K, and 30K run. The challenge will lie within the terrain of the different trails. For runners who are more experienced, these runs are moderately challenging. However, the runs will be more difficult for runners who don't have as much experience. Parking opens at 6:30 a.m. After the races, there will be food and beverages available along with the awards ceremonies. For more information and to register for an event, please visit the website above.

Hinsdale Wine Walk

Downtown Hinsdale

October 10, 5-8 p.m.

hinsdalechamber.com

The Hinsdale Chamber and the Village of Hinsdale will be hosting the 5th annual Hinsdale wine walk on Thursday, October 10, at participating downtown businesses. Participants will go to a designated location prior to the event to have their ID checked, get their souvenir wine glass and a lanyard with a map of participating retailers providing samples of red, white, and sparkling wines. Tickets are currently on sale at the website above.



Taste of Egypt
Festival

MAKING THE WHEELS GO 'ROUND

A local former bus driver shares his love for kids and kindness

By Mia Jones

Rick Zarek knew that he did not want to be just any ordinary bus driver; he wanted to be something different.

Zarek, a former school bus driver, drove the Hinsdale route for two and a half years for Timothy Christian Schools. Since leaving TCS, he has also driven for Westchester Public School District 92½ and Montini Catholic High School.

Previously, Zarek drove ambulances and fire trucks as a firefighter and EMT for the Berkeley Fire Department. Due to his experience, his son suggested that he become a school bus driver.

In his ten years of bus driving, Zarek was known for brightening kids' school days with fun surprises. He started a "birthday club" for the kids he drove on the bus, getting them a small gift and a card.

During the holidays, he would give kids who rode his bus a stocking filled with some school supplies items, like pencils. If one of the kids was out sick for a day, they would receive a get-well card and a gift card from Zarek.

"I didn't do anything because I wanted something in return; it was just because I wanted to. I wanted to be something different. I didn't want to be just a bus driver. Anyone who

passes the test can be a bus driver," said Zarek.

Zarek's acts of kindness and appreciation for the kids allowed him to develop friendly relationships with them and their families. He got to know kids' interests and quirks, making a simple bus ride to and from school more enjoyable and fun.

Two hours a day, five days a week, Zarek spent time driving kids of all different ages to and from school.

"I wanted the kids to have a smile on their faces. I didn't care about what it cost. I wanted them to have a good time, and I wanted to be the best driver they ever had," said Zarek.

It is no secret that Mr. Rick, which is the name the kids gave him, brought lots of joy and smiles to their faces. Zarek officially retired from school bus driving in May 2024. ■

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- RICK ZAREK



Rick Zarek and kids from his Hinsdale bus route

Pure Michigan

Autumnal days on Michigan's "Sunset Coast" are the perfect weekend trip when the weather turns cool

BY MIA JONES

Discover why Lake Michigan's coastline is a fantastic place to visit even beyond the summertime.

Within a comfortable, maximum three-hour car ride from the western suburbs of Chicago, you can take your pick from vineyards, restaurants, and rejuvenating places to relax for a weekend away.



Round Barn Winery & Estate
in Baroda, MI

MT. TABOR TRAILS IN BUCHANAN, MI

Take a beautiful fall walk with a drink in hand on Round Barn's Mt. Tabor Trails in Buchanan and Baroda, MI. The four trail options, varying in length and intensity, venture through the fields and woods between the Round Barn Winery & Estate in Baroda and Tabor Hill Winery & Restaurant in Buchanan. Your scenic tasting adventure can begin at either one of the locations, where there will be food, beer, wine, and cocktails to choose from. Heated igloos and fire pits allow for a cozy time outdoors with family and friends while enjoying the views of Round Barn Estate. The Estate can house up to eight guests for a more extended weekend stay, but local lodges and hotels are just down the road.



New Buffalo Beach in September

NEW BUFFALO, MI

A historic beach town, New Buffalo provides a quiet getaway weekend. If you are looking for a tranquil place to stay, The Neighborhood Hotel New Buffalo offers nine different beachy-feeling suites for a relaxing stay for two. For more space, they also have a hotel nearby in Grand Beach, which is only a 10-minute drive from New Buffalo! The Stray Dog Bar and Grill is a must-try for American cuisine and beers, complete with a cozy fireplace for chill fall nights. Visit New Buffalo's first brewery at Beer Church Brewing Co., which is indeed a literal church. They have a pizza-making class and a heated outdoor beer garden, and brunch and breakfast are served until 2 p.m.



Historic DeZwaan Windmill at Holland's Windmill Island Gardens

HOLLAND, MI

The famous Michigan town of Holland will host its annual Fall Fest on main 8th Street this year. From Friday, October 4 to Saturday, October 5, the festival will feature professional pumpkin carving, pumpkin painting, street performers, and a fall artisan market. During your stay, visit the many boutiques, breweries, restaurants, and coffee shops in downtown Holland. If you are looking for a hotel that's right downtown for the fall fun, book the Courtyard Holland Downtown by Marriott. And no worries, Windmill Island Gardens will be open through October 6 to see the 250-year-old DeZwaan Windmill.



Aerial view of the town of Saugatuck

SAUGATUCK, MI

Charming and picturesque, Saugatuck is known as the "Art Coast of Michigan." Explore the creative atmosphere of this town at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, where you can view breathtaking galleries and crafted goods. Saugatuck Art Traders has original paintings for sale as well. Saugatuck has plenty of boutiques and small businesses for all shopping lovers for fall and winter attire finds. Crane's Winery, located in Fennville, produces local wine and hard cider for tasting. Speaking of cider, if you are on the hunt for hand-pressed, hard apple cider to sip on this fall, take a short drive over to Virtue Farms in Fennville.



The St. Joseph North Pier Lighthouse

ST. JOSEPH, MI

Right along the beach, St. Joseph features great recreational activities for the whole family to enjoy this fall. The Curious Kids' Museum & Discovery Zone contains multiple hands-on exhibits, such as a play veterinarian clinic, a waterpower tower, an apple orchard, and a farm. St. Joseph is another art-filled city featuring the nonprofit Krasl Art Center with sculptures and exhibits for kids and adults inside and outside the building. There's also the Box Factory for the Arts Gallery, located inside a historic building, which reveals four exhibits that are free and open to the public. For a more sophisticated and adult adventure, visit the White Pine Winery Tasting Room for inviting red and white wines.



A Michigan sunset in South Haven

OFF MAP GLAMPING IN SOUTH HAVEN, MI

If "glamping" has been on your bucket list for some time now, this fall might be a good time to give it a go. The Off Map Glamping site in South Haven can make that early fall camping trip a reality. With luxury, furnished tents, and wood-burning stoves, this gorgeous site will leave you feeling relaxed and refreshed after a whirlwind summer. A short, convenient drive away are local farms, orchards, bakeries, and restaurants in the South Haven area. Pay a visit to Barden's Farm Market for fresh, homegrown produce, or go to Bumbleberry Acres for the pumpkins, apple cider, bakery, and a petting zoo.