



JB Pritzker, Governor

Jerry Costello II, Agriculture Director

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Miles of Smiles: Illinois State Fair Unveils Theme Celebrating Route 66's Centennial

Parade Entry Applications Accepted Until July 6

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The 2026 Illinois State Fair theme ‘**Miles of Smiles**’ celebrates the 100th anniversary of historic Route 66.

The road to the Illinois State Fair officially begins with a state tradition: the Illinois State Fair Twilight Parade, starting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, August 13. The parade kicks off the 11-day celebration of Illinois agriculture, community, and creativity, winding through Springfield streets and into the heart of the fairgrounds.

From high school bands and community groups to classic cars and creative floats, the Twilight Parade is an annual tradition. **The Illinois State Fair is currently accepting parade entries through July 6.** For more information, visit statefair.illinois.gov or call the Special Events office at 217.782.0777.

“The Twilight Parade has always been about bringing people together, and this year’s ‘Miles of Smiles’ theme captures that spirit perfectly,” said **Jerry Costello II, Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture**. “Just like Route 66 has connected communities and created lifelong memories, this parade invites everyone to take part in a tradition that celebrates the people, places, and pride that make Illinois special.”

“Every great road trip is filled with memorable stops, and the Illinois State Fair is one of Illinois’ favorite destinations,” said **Illinois State Fair Manager Rebecca Clark**. “Whether you are enjoying a lemon shake-up along the parade route, discovering a new favorite carnival ride, or revisiting annual family traditions, we invite everyone to come experience the smiles, nostalgia and adventure at this year’s Fair.”

The Twilight Parade will start at 5:30 p.m. in Lincoln Park and travel onto Sangamon Avenue, entering the fairgrounds through the Main Gate. From there, the parade marches down Main Street, turns left onto Illinois Avenue, and then marches down Grandstand Avenue to exit through Lot 21.

Mark your calendars for the 2026 [Illinois State Fair](http://statefair.illinois.gov), August 13 through August 23 in Springfield.

Stay up to date with all the latest news and announcements from the Illinois State Fair by connecting with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Route 66 Centennial Celebrations

The Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield are on the historic path of Route 66, providing a front-row seat to the 100th anniversary celebrations happening all year. In recognition of a century of Route 66, a road that started in Illinois and helped shape America, **Miles of Smiles** is the 2026 Illinois State Fair theme. Because that's what this road and the Illinois State Fair have always delivered. Miles of memories, miles of music, and miles of smiles shared right here in the heart of Illinois. Now through August 20, visitors to the Illinois State Museum's "Miles of Memories: Stories of Route 66" exhibit can receive a voucher for one adult weekday admission to the Illinois State Fair. Learn more about Route 66 celebrations [here](#).

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