

Saints Peter & Paul's celebrating its 1846 origins with family-friendly music festival in downtown Naperville



The Kid Zone at Homecoming Fest features inflatables, organized kids' games, and face painting. The second annual festival returns on Saturday, Aug. 27. (Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul)

By Michelle Dellinger
Saints Peter & Paul's Parish

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You wouldn't expect to see a live music stage, food trucks, and a beer tent in an elementary school parking lot.

But Saints Peter & Paul's pastor, Fr. Brad Baker, loves every detail of the second annual Homecoming Fest that will be held on the parish grounds on Saturday, Aug. 27.



Saints Peter & Paul's Pastor Brad Baker, right, visits with parishioners at Homecoming Fest 2021. - Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul

Kids doing crafts and playing games on the front lawn while parents and grandparents enjoy visiting together and live music with a craft brew in-hand -- it's all part of his vision to create a community gathering to bring people together again at the end of the summer.

The concept began last spring when the parish was celebrating a milestone anniversary.

"We were doing things to celebrate the 175th that were catechetical and involved worship," says Fr. Baker, "but I wanted to add a social component -- especially in light of the pandemic. There was a need to bring people back together socially."

Another goal? Making memories.



The children's entertainer, Miss Jamie's Farm, will be performing from 2:30 to 3 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, at the 2022 Homecoming Fest. - Courtesy of Chuck Koch

"When I was a kid, I used to look forward to the parish festival every year," he says. "So I wanted to host an event that would create memories for kids and that families would enjoy. And I wanted to do it with better music and food -- thus the food trucks and entertainment lineup."

To make his vision a reality, Fr. Baker knew he needed a talented team, and he asked parishioners Justin and Kris Busche to lead the committee.

"It was an event that appealed to us," says Justin, who co-chairs the event committee with his wife, Kris. "During the summer I have a little more time to dedicate to other things because I'm a teacher, so we accepted his offer."

The inaugural Homecoming Fest was such a success that the parish decided to make it an annual event. Parishioner Mandy Sword says the 2021 event came at the perfect time, in the relative safety of an outdoor event after the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"All three of our kids told us that it was 'the best day of their life,'" says Sword. "I heard similar comments from other families as well. We are truly blessed to be part of such a wonderful community."

This year's attractions include a live music stage with three bands; six food trucks offering a variety of fare; a beer tent serving beer, wine, cider, and hard seltzer; a Kid Zone with children's entertainers, inflatables, and organized games for all ages; docent-led tours of the church sanctuary and its early-1900s sculptures and stained glass; school tours for alumni; and an exhibit of historic artifacts and history panels revealing the historic charism -- and modern updates -- of the parish.



Saints Peter & Paul parishioners view an exhibit of historic artifacts and history panels reveal the historic charism -- and modern updates -- of Saints Peter & Paul. - Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul

"We get a lot of great feedback on the memorabilia that is displayed," says Justin Busche. "As the oldest church in DuPage County, people like to celebrate the history of the parish, and people spend time looking at it."

Parishioner Bonnie O'Donnell agrees. "I heard so often when people were viewing the archives that this event was the way it was years ago -- families getting together, enjoying each other's company, happy to be part of this awesome parish," she says.



A group of friends enjoy Saints Peter & Paul's Homecoming Fest in 2021. - Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul

The Homecoming Fest -- which is open to all in the larger Naperville and west suburban community -- will be held Saturday, Aug. 27, from 2 to 10 p.m. on the grounds of Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, 36 N. Ellsworth.

Wild Daisy starts the entertainment lineup with upbeat country and pop/rock songs from 3 to 5 p.m., with Blooze Brothers performing blues, soul, and classic rock from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Headlining the event is the high-energy party band Hello Weekend, which will play from 8 to 10 p.m.

Tickets are \$5 in advance or \$10 at the door, which does not include food, drink, and merchandise purchases. Advance tickets for seniors are \$5 and \$2 for children, ages 5 to 11. Kids under 5 are admitted free.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit SSPPHoco2022.Eventbrite.com (<http://SSPPHoco2022.Eventbrite.com>).



Saints Peter & Paul's seven-acre campus is transformed into an outdoor entertainment venue -- complete with a live music stage, food trucks, and a beer tent. - Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul

About Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Church

Saints Peter and Paul was founded in 1846 and is the oldest established parish in DuPage County -- currently one of the most active in the Diocese of Joliet. Throughout its history, the parish has been a vibrant and vital part of the Naperville community through dozens

of ministries that focus on parish life, worship, evangelization, and Christian service.



The Kid Zone at Saints Peter & Paul Homecoming Fest features inflatables and organized kids' games. - Courtesy of Saints Peter and Paul

Today, Saints Peter and Paul School educates more than 475 students in preschool through eighth grade, and the parish serves over 4,000 families. Its campus includes seven buildings -- including its stunning Gothic edifice with bell tower -- on a seven-acre campus in the heart of Naperville.

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