

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – August 14, 2023



Visit Unforgettable Forgottonia
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MACOMB'S ART, WIND & FIRE FESTIVAL WEEKEND HAS EVEN MORE IN '23

(Macomb, IL) –Macomb's annual *Art, Wind & Fire Festival* weekend, held this year on September 8-10, will have even more to offer than the three unique annual signature featured events that includes the 52nd *Gazebo Art Festival*, the annual *YFC Disc Golf Tournament*, and of course the Midwest's granddaddy of them all, the 35th annual *Macomb Hot Air Balloon Rally*. This year visitors will also find the unforgettable celebration of *Forgottonia's 50th Anniversary* plus the much anticipated inaugural *WIU Mega Reunion!*

ART: *The Gazebo Art Festival* takes place as it traditionally has for an amazing fifty-one years in Chandler Park on Saturday from 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM. Featuring a juried art sale showcasing dozens of incredible regional artists exhibiting exceptional original works of art in all mediums including, paint, sculpture, photography, jewelry, ceramics, fiber and many more. The event is free and all works will be on sale to the public. Details at www.facebook.com/GazeboArtFestival.

WIND: *Macomb YFC Open Mystery Challenge Disc Golf Tournament* a novel event which is open to the public and tees off at 9:00 AM on Saturday at the Macomb Park District's beautiful Everwood Disc Course. Registration begins at 8:00 AM and the tournament will be played at both the Park District's Everwood Disc Course and WIU's Sipolt Memorial Course. Entry is \$40 per player with all funds raised directly benefiting youth in our community. Find more details and register at <https://www.yfcwi.org/macomb-yfc-open-2023>

FIRE: The Annual Balloon Rally began in 1987 and is considered the granddaddy of all Midwest Hot-Air Balloon festivals. This 35th anniversary opens at 6:00 PM Friday night, enjoy food, beverages and live music as you watch over 20 giant Hot-Air Balloons lift off and fly out from Vince Grady Field on the campus of WIU. Then Saturday, beginning in the wee hours of the morning and lasting all day, witness the skies across Macomb filled with balloons. Starting again at 6:00 PM at Vince Grady Field after the WIU Leatherneck's football game enjoy delicious fare from regional food trucks and listen to live music while strolling amongst a field of towering Hot-Air Balloons. Then as the sun sets and the pilots fire things up for the unforgettable spectacle that is "The Balloon Glow!" Learn more at www.facebook.com/MacombBalloonRally.

But that's not all! This year's Art, Wind & Fire weekend also coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the inception of our mythical and beloved Republic of Forgottonia and Western Illinois University's first ever, eagerly anticipated all alumni MEGA Reunion!

Forgottonia 50th Anniversary Celebration will begin at 11:30am in Forgottonia's "capital" of Fandon where Neil Gamm became the self-appointed Governor. There, the main road will be officially declared by McDonough County board president Scott Schwerer as the *Gov. Neal Gamm Forgottonia Freeway* along with a military gun salute to the former Vietnam veteran. This will be followed at 1:30pm at Macomb's Forgottonia Brewing with Mayor Mike Inman proclaiming the date as Gov. Neal Gamm Day with a group toast to Gamm accompanied by a band performance from **Forgottonia Train Wreck**

WIU MEGA Reunion will be an entire weekend event starting on Friday, Sept. 8th at 5:00 pm on the campus of Western Illinois University and lasting through the afternoon of Sunday the 10th. In addition to all the above events, the MEGA Reunion will also feature a Reunion Social, a Mega-Tent Cook Out & Tailgate Party, Leathernecks Football game, Painting of The Paws, Community Service event with even more events to be announced. For details visit <https://www.wiumegareunion.com> or <https://www.wiu.edu/alumni/megareunion.php>

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