

St. Mary's Oktoberfest to Feature Keg Tapping and Local History in Downtown Alton

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The 16th annual St. Mary's Oktoberfest will combine all the fun of the German tradition with Alton history this weekend.

From Friday, Oct. 6 through Sunday, Oct. 8, community members can enjoy live music, a keg tapping, German and American foods, inflatables, games, auctions and a raffle for up to \$10,000, with proceeds going back to [St. Mary's Catholic Church and School](#). Organizer Carolyn Simansky explained that the Oktoberfest tradition began in 2008 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of St. Mary's in Alton and is still "going strong."

"When our parish started back in 1858, it was started by German immigrants, so that's why we decided to have an Oktoberfest, to kind of celebrate that German heritage that started our parish," she said. "We want to get together as a parish family to celebrate our parish, but we also want to celebrate with the wider family of the whole Alton community."

The weekend kicks off at 5:30 p.m. on Friday with a [5K and one-mile fun run](#) through downtown Alton. The [Glendale Riders](#) will take the stage from 7–11 p.m. and attendees can enjoy a limited menu with burgers, brats, hotdogs and more. On Saturday, [St. Louis Express](#) and Dixie Dudes will both play from 1–4 p.m. on different stages, followed by [Lady Luck](#) at 7 p.m. The [Big Shake Daddies](#) and [St. Louis Express](#) will play from 12:30–4 p.m. on Sunday, and then the [Harman Family Bluegrass Band](#) will take over from 5:30–8 p.m. The [Harman Family Bluegrass Band](#) will also oversee Sunday's live auction at 6 p.m. on the main stage.

Starting at 1 p.m. on Saturday, attendees can try a combined menu of German and American classics, including bratwursts, frankfurters, turkey legs, loaded baked potatoes, hamburgers and more. The signature "German Skillet Meal" is a favorite for those who want to get in the Oktoberfest spirit. The adult crowd can also check out the beer and wine gardens, complete with German brands and this year's special chocolate Oktoberfest drink, the St. Mary's Schokolade.

In true Oktoberfest fashion, Saturday's keg tapping is the main event. There will be a small ceremony before the keg is tapped onstage at 1 p.m. on Oct. 7.

"The beer from that keg runs free until it's gone," Simansky added. "It's a great time to be down there because we've got the German band playing and the little ceremony that goes on with tapping the keg, just like they do at the big Oktoberfest in Germany. And then if you're down there in the tent, you'll probably get a free beer."

Simansky promises there's something for everybody at Oktoberfest. Case in point, kids can check out a variety of inflatables and games, and the older crowd can enjoy some adult gaming. The [basket raffle](#) and [live auction](#) promise several big ticket items, but

even if you can't make it out to the festival, you can take part in the [silent auction](#) online. You can view a [full schedule of events and entertainment](#) on the [official St. Mary's Oktoberfest website](#).

Ultimately, the event is a fun way to commemorate St. Mary's history and connect with the larger Alton community while raising money for the church and school. She added that the community has already shown their support by donating auction items and offering their help over the weekend. With approximately 600 volunteer slots to fill, she is happy to announce that the St. Mary's parents and congregation have stepped up, adding that the church has "a lot of community spirit."

"Along with celebrating with the whole Alton community, this also benefits our school and our parish to keep everything running and the education going there for the students in our school," Simansky said. "It's right downtown where everybody can come, and we want everyone to come celebrate with us and have a good time and just meet all the people of Alton. It'll be a fun weekend."

The event will take place in the streets near St. Mary's Church at 536 E. 3rd Street in Alton. For more information about St. Mary's Oktoberfest, visit their [official website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

