

Living History Days Festival Promises Free Family Fun in Edwardsville

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE/GLEN CARBON - The Madison County Historical Society (MCHS) promises fun for all generations at the upcoming Living History Days Festival.

This three-day festival will run Oct. 6–8, 2023 at different historical sites in Edwardsville and Glen Carbon. From vintage vehicle exhibitions to Native American

craft demonstrations, there are free activities and displays for everyone to enjoy. MCHS works to share local history through events like the festival and their Madison County Historical Museum and Archival Library.

“As a county historical society, we try to promote things that are saving history all throughout the county,” explained historian and MCHS board member Cindy Reinhardt.

This mission is never more prominent than at the annual Living History Days Festival, which kicks off at 8 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 6, 2023 with a concert by [Lil’ Ed & the Blues Imperials](#) at [Wilkey Theatre](#) in Edwardsville. [Heartsfield](#) will take the stage at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday. Both bands will provide a roots and Americana soundtrack to the weekend.

Most of Saturday’s events take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the MCHS campus, located at 801 N. Main Street in Edwardsville. Artisans will demonstrate Native American crafts throughout the day at the Madison County History Museum. A display of arrows, spears and other artifacts will be available, and you can also bring any Native American artifacts to be identified by an expert.

[St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church](#), located at 406 Hillsboro Avenue, will welcome visitors to see their fall quilt display. Nearby, the Vintage Vehicle Exhibit will include restored tractors, trucks and cars.

“These vehicles are the pride and joy of their owners, and they are just in beautiful, near-mint condition, and they are happy to have you come by and pose with them or tell you what restoration work they did,” Reinhardt added.

At 12:30 p.m., a vintage “base ball” game will kick off at Winston Brown Recreation Complex. The [St. Louis Brown Stockings](#) will take on the [Belleville Stags](#), and spectators can root for the home team with a cold Stag beer.

You can venture out to Glen Carbon to check out the 1850s Yanda Log Cabin from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Woodlawn Cemetery will also host a “Voices of Our Past” performance by the Edwardsville High School Alumni Players, complete with songs and the stories of a few important people buried at the cemetery.

Younger family members will enjoy the [Edwardsville Children’s Museum](#) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m, which charges \$8 for admission but will offer free outdoor toys and games from the 19th and 20th centuries for kids to check out. The [Nickel Plate Station](#), a railroad station that’s over 135 years old, is usually part of the Children’s Museum, but visitors can enjoy it for free this weekend from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday and 1–4 p.m. on Sunday.

“The Nickel Plate is just incredible, but there’s still a lot of people that, because it’s part of the children’s museum and maybe they don’t have children, they haven’t been there yet,” Reinhardt said. “This is your opportunity to just stop by and see what they did to the place.”

Also on Sunday, Oct. 8, 2023, is a “Chatauqua with Abraham Lincoln and Friends” at 1 p.m. at Edwardsville City Park. Lincoln, Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony will share their stories in between performances by Edwardsville High School’s a capella group and orchestra.

“All of the folks that are doing the reenactments are people who have done these characters for many years in diverse places, including the Abraham Lincoln Museum in Springfield,” Reinhardt noted. “They can just inhabit the character. They’re very good.”

Saturday’s “Voices of Our Past” performance costs \$20 for adults and \$10 for kids under age 12; purchase your tickets at the [Woodlawn Cemetery website](#). You can go to the [Wilbey Theatre website](#) to purchase tickets for the concerts on Friday and Saturday night. MCHS will be accepting donations, but the other Living History Days Festival activities are completely free.

The MCHS museum and library will also be open all weekend, and Reinhardt said there are some exciting exhibits coming soon. While the Living History Days Festival is a weekend devoted to honoring the past, the museum and library keep the spirit alive all year long.

“A lot of people are wondering what’s going on at the museum, and it’s a fantastic building. It’s from 1836 and we’re working our way through. We’re almost ready to start installing exhibits,” Reinhardt said. “There’s a ton of things to see at the archival library. We’d love for people to stop by and see what we have to offer.”

For a [full schedule of the Living History Days Festival](#) and to stay updated on upcoming events, visit the [MCHS Facebook page](#) or the [official Madison County Historical Society website at MadCoHistory.org](#).