



Rockton-Roscoe News

September 2023 ♦ First Edition Printed on Paper ♦ Published Daily at roscoenews.com
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113th Roscoe Fall Festival returns to Leland Park

By Michael McGinnis 

Friday, Sept. 8, 2023

5 p.m. – Festival & Midway opens (featuring Skinners' Amusement Rides)

5 p.m. – Poison Ivy Pub Beer Tent opens (beer, wine, Bloody Marys)

5 p.m. – Lions Cafe opens, featuring cream chicken on biscuit

6 p.m. – Lions Bingo Tent opens

6 – 10 p.m. – The OGMC with Kevin & Greg

10 p.m. – Midway closes.

Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023

10 a.m. – Kiddie Costume Parade

11:30 a.m. – Kids wristbands go on sale

12-4 p.m. – Kids' Day on The Midway: for \$25, kids can buy a wristband good for four hours on all rides.

12 – 4 p.m. – Karaoke (Main Stage) – all proceeds go to Vets Roll

12 p.m. – Lions Cafe opens, featuring ham dinner

12 p.m. – Poison Ivy Pub Beer Tent opens (beer, wine, Bloody Marys)

1 p.m. – Lions Bingo Tent opens

6 – 10 p.m. – Dead Man's Hand (Main Stage) – Southern rock, blues, classic rock

10 p.m. – Midway closes

Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023

7 -9:45 a.m. – Breakfast at Leland Park – Lions Bingo Tent – Tickets \$8

11 a.m. – Lions Festival Parade

12 p.m. – Lions Cafe opens, featuring pork chop dinner

12 p.m. – Midway opens

12 p.m. – Poison Ivy Pub Beer Tent opens

12 -7 p.m. – Carnival Ride Specials

1 p.m. – Lions Bingo Tent opens

4 – 8 p.m. – STEREOtype

(Main Stage) – high-energy rock band

7 p.m. – Carnival Rides close

8 p.m. – Grand Prize Drawing (Main Stage) – cash prizes

Raffle Tickets: \$5 each or five for \$20

Bingo Tent – open all three days.

Exhibitor Tent – Check out our local vendors


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The 112th annual Roscoe Fall Festival runs September 8-10, 2023 at Leland Park. It is one of the longest running events of its kind in the Stateline area, since 1910. The Roscoe Lions Club has organized the annual event since 1971.



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What's happening in the Stateline this month

2023 Roscoe Fall Festival

Friday-Sunday, September 8-10 2023

Leland Park, Roscoe

The 113th Roscoe Fall Festival runs September 8-10, 2023 at Leland Park. It is one of the longest running events of its kind in the Stateline area. Once again, activities, music, parades and food will be packed into three full days and nights of music, great food, a carnival and two parades.



Essence, dressed in her puffy red dress, took a moment to have a few words with a puppy during the Saturday Kiddie Parade at the 2021 Fall Festival.

Free Clothing Giveaway

Saturday September 9 2023

First Congregational Church, Roscoe

During Fall Festival, a gently used clothing giveaway will be held outside First Congregational Church on Sept 9-10. There will also be a garden table with free water & a children's craft table. Donations of clothing are accepted 9-12 on Thursday & Friday or Friday evening during setup. Donations accepted but not required.

Jack Lovejoy Golf Outing

Saturday September 9 2023
8:00am

Macktown Golf Course, Rockton

Benefiting the Jack Lovejoy Scholarship Fund and hosted by the Rockton Lions Club, this golf fundraiser includes a refreshment meal, an after party, a catered lunch, games, a silent auction, and prizes. The Jack Lovejoy Scholarship is a career and technical education scholarship awarded annually to graduating seniors of Hononegah High School and South Beloit High School.

Fall Prairie Harvest Day 2023

Saturday September 9 2023
9:00am

Nygren Wetland Preserve, Rockton

Help collect seeds from native wildflowers and grasses which will be used in future prairie plantings at NLI preserves. Start anytime and work as long as you like during the event hours of 9 AM – 12 PM. Snacks and water will be provided. Dress for the weather.

"If This Land Could Talk" History Walk

Saturday September 9 2023
1:00pm

Nature At The Confluence

Come walk with us to learn about the people who lived at the confluence of Turtle Creek and the Rock River and those who just passed through. You learn about

the Ho-Chunk, the Métis, fur traders, Irish settlers, one of the greatest heroes of World War I, plus a few surprise visitors. Therese Oldenburg will be your guide on this walk which is less than 3/4 mile on even ground.

Archaeology Sunday

Sunday September 10 2023
2:00pm

Macktown Living History, Rockton

Find out what happens when archaeologists go on a dig. Learn about the historic and prehistoric excavations that have been done right here at Macktown! Discover how and why archaeologists know where to dig, how to set up excavation units, and dig in standard levels. Participate in the washing, sorting and identification of the artifacts collected. Donations gladly accepted

Bushnell-Wheeler Open House

Sunday September 10 2023
11:00am

Bushnell-Wheeler Home, South Beloit

No charge for admission. Tour this historic 1856 home. Grand opening of barn addition. Craft and bake sale.

In-Person Story Time

Wednesday September 13 2023
10:00am

North Suburban Library - Roscoe

Children ages 3-5 years old enjoy stories, music, movement, fingerplays and a craft with their caregiver. Happens several times a month.

Fungus Function

Wednesday September 13 2023
6:00pm

Nature At The Confluence

Tickets \$10/Person. Many of us love fungi for the food and medicine they share with us, but did you know that they also have a lot of community building wisdom to teach us as humans? The evening will also include a mushroom-inspired potluck,

communal discussion, and optional art project. Best suited for ages 10 and up. Space is limited, so please register in advance.

Live Music: Paul Bronson Acoustic

Friday September 15 2023
6:00pm

Hidden Creek Estates

Paul Bronson Acoustic Music is providing the sonic backdrop at Hidden Creek Estates in Roscoe, IL. Food and drink available for this event. Our food truck L'Osteria can be found next to the yellow barn on our patio. Our menu is European inspired and locally sourced.

Morning Bird Hike

Friday September 15 2023
6:30pm

Nature at The Confluence

\$5/person. Start your day with a slow, calming walk as we observe and identify the many birds that call The Confluence home, including those migrating for the fall! Binoculars and bird lists are provided and all experience levels are welcome. Space is limited so please register in advance online.

Football: Freeport and Hononegah

Friday September 15 2023
7:15pm

Hononegah, Kelsey Field

Freeport and Hononegah High School will play a 2023 NIC 10 Conference football game.

Historic Downtown Rockton Walking Tour: Part III

Saturday September 16 2023
10:00am

Rockton Village Hall

The third and final tour for the summer of 2023, this tour will provide an overview of Rockton's early industries as it moves to River Street to learn about early building materials, Greek Revival style architecture, and about the interesting people who lived here.

Talcott Library Board Meeting

Monday September 18 2023
7:00pm

Talcott Free Library, Rockton

The Talcott Free Library Board of Trustees meets at 7 p.m. on the third Monday of each month. All meetings are open to the public.

Roscoe Lions Blood Drive

Thursday September 21 2023
12:00pm

Roscoe United Methodist Church

For more information about events or to register for them, scan to visit our community calendar at roscoenews.com/calendar



All blood types needed. To schedule a time to donate, contact Tom Mann at 815-623-3190. But walk-ins are welcome. Please bring a photo ID and have plenty to eat and drink before donating.

McDonald's Cruise Nights

Thursday September 21 2023
5:00pm

Bucciferro Family McDonald's, Rockton

Combined with the incredible Gentlemen's Car Club and former Meadows Mart Cruise Night, with nostalgic low prices for burgers, fries, and ice cream, plus Joe Locke Hits DJ, \$100 cash drawing, and kids remote car racing and prizes.

Stone Bridge Half Marathon and 5k

Saturday September 23 2023
7:30am

Leland Park, Roscoe

A very fast, out and back half marathon course set up on the scenic Stone Bridge Trail in Roscoe, Illinois.

History Hike + Ripple

Sunday September 24 2023
1:00pm

Nature at The Confluence, South Beloit

Join our staff for a guided hike on our trails where you will learn about the Indigenous and industrial history of the land, followed by a group trip to the M & M Dari Ripple. Dari Ripple will match all donations given to Nature At The Confluence on September 23rd and 24th.

Know of an event you want others to know about? You can post events for free, or make them the featured event for only \$2 a day. Visit roscoenews.com and click on the gold button, or scan the code below.



The Hononegah brotherhood goes to another level with the Benson Brothers

By Harold Bone



Jacob Benson plays right guard for the Hononegah Indians, while his brother Maximus plays right tackle.

Famous author Robert Rivers once said, "Brothers aren't simply close; brothers are knit together." That could easily have been written about Hononegah brothers Jacob and Maximus Benson. Jacob plays right guard for the Hononegah Indians, while his younger brother Maximus plays right tackle. The duo is part of a football offense that has huge expectations for this season.

The brothers are young in their football careers but are beyond mature as human beings. As I worked on the story about the brothers, I found more people say things about their character than their size or playing ability - though Jacob is listed at 6'4" 290 lbs and Maximus Benson is listed at 6'2" 300 lbs. The theme that I came back to was gentle giants. Hononegah Indians offensive line coach Phil Adams stated "Our program is going to be better because we have players like the Benson brothers."

Hononegah offensive line Coach Adams said, "This is my first year

ever having brothers that played the same position that I have coached. I have coached for 18 years and haven't had this."

The uniqueness isn't lost on the brothers. Recently speaking with both Jacob and Maximus, I asked if they would like to play together at the next level. Both agreed that it would be great but they are enjoying the time spent with the brotherhood that is Hononegah Indian football. They credited the coaches, teammates, and the entire Hononegah Indian community for allowing them to have such a great experience so far.

As far back as I can see, the Benson brothers are the first brothers to start on the O-line together in quite some time if ever. The program has had quite a few brother combos, just not on the offensive line.

Jacob Benson started his high school career not even playing football. As a freshman he felt the desire to play basketball. After this one season of hoops, he felt the

football bug catch on. Coach Phil Adams says, "He came in his sophomore year and really showed that he has been working on his studying of the play calls and his checks. He was also very coachable! We talked as an offensive staff about the depth chart for the offensive line. We had a couple of players who left the program, which gave more opportunities for kids that have been improving through our program. Jake took advantage of his opportunity last year and played right tackle for us as a sophomore."

Adams says, "This year, he comes in as a junior and is acting like he is a senior. I mean that in a good way. He has studied the playbook and understands what our offense is doing. He is learning the calls at all of the offensive line positions. This is vital this year, because I made the decision to move him from right tackle to right guard. He has two younger players next



Maximus and Jake Benson

to him that he can help with calls if need be."

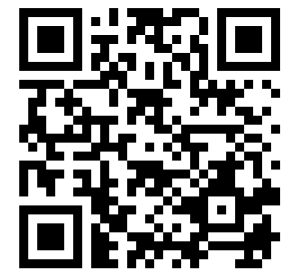
Maximus played his freshman season on the freshman team. After last season he was determined to work to play on the varsity team. He learned the playbook and worked to improve his skills and his body. Like Jacob,

MORE BROTHERS | Page 5





About Us:

Rockton-Roscoe News is the first daily news outlet for Roscoe and Roscoe, Illinois since 1835. Now covering South Beloit as well, our free stories are read about 90,000 times a month, with more than 1,400 daily email subscribers. Our news is published online each day. We are supported by our advertisers and contributions from readers.

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Get ready for this fall's Vintage Shop Hop - October 6-7

By Alycia Dioneda 

Vintage lovers, shopaholics, and antiquarians rejoice! For The Vintage Shop Hop is coming back this Fall 2023!

Event planner and creator Ann Campos is the brains behind the business plan of The Vintage Shop Hop, a semi-annual event that showcases over 400 vintage shops, antique stores, barn sales, and ladies' boutiques in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The two-day-long, self-guided road trip typically takes place in the fall and spring seasons.

This fall, The Vintage Shop Hop will take place on October 6 and 7 and marks the 10th year of what has been hailed as the 'mother lode' of all vintage road trips.

The idea originated ten years ago, when Ann, who firmly believes in shopping local, wanted to find a way to help out locally-owned vintage shops, antique stores, and boutiques during the months when shoppers aren't shopping as frequently.

Ann has an extensive background in marketing and spent several years producing large vintage markets. She used her experience promoting businesses and married it with her love of all things vintage to create The Vintage Shop Hop.

During the event, shoppers can click, tap or open the interactive Google Map, to check out the ever-growing list of participating shops and vendors that is linked from The Vintage Shop Hop's Facebook page. Between the company's three social media

pages, (where the event is promoted), the fan base has grown to over 78,000 followers.

Each shop is required to have an "in-store" promotion for the weekend, and many shops go miles beyond just complimentary refreshments (like mimosas and dessert treats). "We encourage the shops to create a day unlike the other 363 days of the year," says Campos.

As a result, shoppers will find fun promotions like "pop a balloon" or "spin the wheel" to determine their discount, door prizes, meet-the-maker, paint demos, live music, food trucks, and free swag bags just for stopping in. Others create punch cards and promotions to get people moving around their region, hire live music, and invite food trucks to



**Vintage Shop Hop™ 2023
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park in their lots. All shops will be ready and waiting to greet new and familiar faces to their store and provide the shoppers with the best in customer service.

Starting with 180 shops ten years ago, the Vintage Shop Hop has increased in popularity each year.

This year, we can expect over 400 participating shops. Currently, there are eleven in the mini-region Ann refers to as The Central Stateline Participants:

- The Frosted Farmhouse: 112 Hawick Street, Rockton, IL
- Pick-a-Dilly Antiques: 120 W Main Street, Rockton, IL
- JR Finally Art Studio & Gallery: 210 W Main Street, Rockton, IL

- Angela's Attic: 1020 Gardner Street, South Beloit, IL
- Best of Beloit Vintage Mall: 1019 Gardner Street, South Beloit, IL
- Hidden Treasures Mall & Antiques: 6329 N 2nd Street Highway 251, Loves Park, IL
- Sweet Pea Vintage: 12875 Caledonia Road, Belvidere, IL
- East State Antique and Collectible Mall: 5411 E State Street, Rockford, IL
- Rags to Vintage: 4760 IL-173, Poplar Grove, IL
- Down on the Farm Antiques and Collectibles: 2705 Blake Rd, Garden Prairie, IL

The list doesn't stop there. Remember, this event covers the entire southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois regions. Thousands of eagerly waiting shoppers look forward to the twice-yearly opportunity to be a tourist in their own area, and to find one-of-a-kind pieces, rare or antique collectibles, unique home decor, and more.

There is still time for shops to register to be a part of The Vintage Shop Hop by clicking the "sign up" tab on the event's Facebook Page, or by directly messaging Ann, who says, "I really think if a shop is not participating, it could only be because they don't know about it. This is the best shopping

MORE VINTAGE | Page 5



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Vintage / from Page 4



Ann Campos, owner and creator of The Vintage Shop Hop, is pictured here at The Frosted Farmhouse, one of the event's participating shops, located in Rockton.

experience that people want and a golden opportunity to showcase your business." Registration is happening now through September 22, 2023. Shops will remain on the list and stay on the map for six months, in time for the Spring's Vintage Shop Hop.

Ann feels this is also a time for shoppers to be reminded of the importance of supporting our local small businesses, stating, "If you don't support the local guy, who will know if they exist? Or how they exist? This is a way for you to be involved in your community, to be a part of your downtown. People are so excited about this list. Get off your couch and go support the local guy!"

Who knows what you'll find while shopping? Ann assures you that what you won't find are the same things you'd find in big-box stores.

She says, "There has been a huge resurgence in vintage decor- even if it's just one piece, vintage adds a lot of character to a room. This is a lifestyle for some people."

So clear out your schedule for that weekend, grab your favorite shopping buddy, and get ready for a vintage adventure!

I don't know about you, but I know where I will be on October 6th and 7th. Hope to see you all there!

Roscoe Fall Festival history: since 1910

By Jean Seegers  and Michael McGinnis

In 1910, the Village of Roscoe was unincorporated, and sustained by the Roscoe Improvement Association (RIA). There was no local government to levy taxes, but also no local government to build fire stations or utilities. As the population grew, residents and the RIA wanted to beautify and improve their little village by adding sidewalks and better roads.

Money was needed to make it happen. The Association decided to hold an all-day festival at Roosevelt Park, now called Leland Park. The park, located at 1070 Third Street (or 5727 Broad Street), between Harrison Street and Broad Street, was donated to the village by Alvan Leland.

The first Fall Festival was held on Saturday, Sept. 17, 1910. It featured a grand parade of floats, automobiles, livestock and "various attractive features."

Domestic arts, curios, relics, agricultural products and flowers were displayed at the Town Hall. Livestock, pets and poultry were also exhibited.

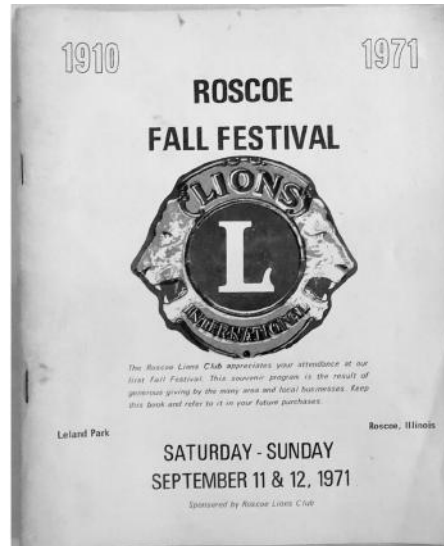
At noon, a communal picnic dinner was served in the park.

According to Images of America: Roscoe, written by local historian Dorothy Hunter (now deceased) and her daughter Doris Hunter Tropp, the first Fall Festival was a real success.

As years went by, more entertainment, pageants and parades were introduced.

Beginning in 1918, an annual pageant became the featured event at the Fall Festival. Hundreds of residents - almost the entire town - dressed up in costume to represent themes such as The Cycle of Time (1921), The Constitution of the United States (1937), and Out of the Past (1935).

The author and set designer of many of the pageants was Alice McCurry, whose husband Kay McCurry served as Roscoe Township Supervisor for more



than 20 years.

After 1965, when the Village was incorporated, the RIA disbanded and the Roscoe Lions Club took over sponsorship of the festival.

A few adjustments and changes have been added through the years. The festival began holding raffles in 1971. A new Dodge automobile was the grand prize that year and for several years after.

About the Lions Club

Lions Club International was founded by William Parry Woods, in Evansville Indiana. The first charter members were from Geneva, Switzerland and Stockholm, Sweden.

In 1925, Helen Keller charged the Lions with becoming "Knights of the Blind Against Darkness."

In 1948, a Lions Club formed in the Kalaupapa, Hawaii leper colony. All charter members suffered from Hansen's disease (leprosy).

In 1995, the Lions partnered with the Carter Center, led by former US President Jimmy Carter, in a crusade to combat trachoma and river blindness in Africa and Latin America.

The Roscoe Lions Club started in 1948, following World War II.

Locally, the Lions Club

contributes funds to Illinois research for juvenile diabetes, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, The Center for Sight and Hearing in Rockford, IL, food drives for local pantries, five \$1,000 scholarships every year for graduating Hononegah Community High School students, and camps for hearing impaired children.

They also help fund the area Boys and Girl's Club and sponsor the annual egg hunt in Leland Park in the spring and partner with the Harlem-Roscoe Fire Department in hosting the Thanksgiving turkey dinner at the fire station.

Mark Parma serves as Roscoe Lions Club President, JeannieAnn Parma is treasurer, and Gladys Hibbard serves as secretary.

Brothers / from Page 3

he attended lineman camps over the summer. Coach Adams and the entire staff are a bit surprised as to how well the young sophomore has taken to his right tackle role on Varsity.

Adams says, "He came in to start camp with an injury that he sustained at a lineman camp. I honestly thought that it could hinder his development without getting the reps. He hung around and paid great attention to what we were doing on the field. I would drill him in our offensive line film sessions about assignments and rules. He would ACE them all!!! When he was able to get back on the field and participate, I gave him his shot. I wanted to see where he was at. He was picking up blitzes that we were having issues with. He understood the assignments. He was grading out very well."

Asking Coach Adams about the potential of the brothers and how far they could go, he replied, "I could see them pushing each other to be a duo in the All-Conference voting!"

Mom Chelsea says, "They are just outstanding student-athletes, and just all-around great kids." She feels very lucky and fortunate to have two sons starting on the same team at the same time but understands the work they put into school and football. "Every night they come home and they discuss practice and they watch each other's game films and give each other tips. They help each other with their homework. They're amazing brothers."

Thank you to Chelsea, Jacob and Maximus Benson as well as Coach Phil Adams for allowing me to share the story. Images in the story provided by Chelsea Benson, Hononegah Football, and Andrea Van Briesen Photography.



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Rockton 7th grader gives away 170 pairs of sports shoes

By Marianne Mueller



When the 2023-2024 school year started, Nathan Schmidt entered seventh grade as a student at Stephen Mack Middle School (SMMS) in Rockton, Illinois. But Schmidt spent part of his summer helping other young people (and their feet) through a special project.

Schmidt's mom Tammy and his friend Mason Sharp, another student at SMMS, worked with him to collect "Second Chance Sports Shoes."

The purpose behind this mission - giving gently used sports shoes a second chance to play - is to help kids stay active, to help parents save money, and to give the community an opportunity to be involved. Another bonus: reusing is a form of recycling that reduces landfill space.

"I know that kids would need sports shoes or just regular shoes. I play three sports a year, so my mom and I have to get new shoes every few months. We understand the hassle of getting new shoes, so why not donate them to kids in the community," Nathan Schmidt said.

Residents could drop off shoe donations at a variety of places including the Rockton River Market in Settler's Park, two branches of the Stateline YMCA, the Village of Rockton, Talcott Free Library, Gymnastic Academy North in Roscoe, and Bootcamp Academy in Roscoe.

Finally, on Saturday, July 29, 2023, Schmidt hosted a free shoe giveaway at the YMCA Ironworks branch in Beloit.

By that time, with the help of the



overall community, Schmidt had collected 170 pairs of shoes, bypassing his goal of 100.

Schmidt has aspirations of becoming part of the National Jr. Honor Society (NJHS). After he was nominated, "Second Chance Sports Shoes" became his community project.

Requirements for the NJHS include having a GPA of 3.75 or higher, wanting to help the community, and to be nominated. Seventh and eighth grade students who meet those qualifications must also earning a nomination.

Each nominee must do one community project each year as part of the application process. They can also build off what was done in the previous year or years. Once accepted as a part of the organization, each student is required to do 10 hours of volunteer work.

One of the people that Schmidt has always wanted to meet is Village President John Peterson. By doing this project, that door was opened for him as they met at the Rockton River Market.

"I have been wanting to meet President Peterson for a while, as I have always wanted to be involved in politics," Schmidt said.

He adds, "I had my first opportunity in sixth grade when I was elected to the student council. I am hoping to continue growing from that experience."

Schmidt reflects on the overall project. "I had a lot of fun doing this and the people I met along the way were amazing. I can't wait for next year," he said.

Roscoe Fall Festival

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- Roscoe VFW Post 2955
- Skinner's Amusements
- Sophia's Restaurant
- Stepping Stones Children's Center
- The Whiffletree

Did you know there's a service club in your community?

Learn more or get involved at lionsclubs.org/about-us



Lions Clubs International

Lions Club scholarships make a difference

By Harold Bone



Magen Franklin

For the past 45 or so years the Roscoe Lions have given out scholarships to Hononegah High School seniors. In that time, the Roscoe Lions scholarships have impacted hundreds of young people from our community.

As part of the current process the scholarship applicant must be interviewed. So the Roscoe Lions get to meet and see the many,

many, many wonderful young people who will accomplish so much for our community and the world at large.

In the spring of 2023, the scholarship was given away to five students from Hononegah High School. They were Magen Franklin, Lucia Jahn, Gabrielle Murphy, Brayden Partlow, and Delaney Porter.

Following up with a few of the most recent scholarship recipients, you can see why they are so thankful for the Roscoe Lions and what they provide to our community.

Magen Franklin, a 2023 Hononegah High School graduate, is attending Loyola University Chicago. Magen is studying political science on a pre-law track. She plans on using her poli-sci degree to attend law school, although unsure of what kind of law she wants to study. Magen Franklin stated "I love giving back to and supporting my community through service, and so it meant a lot to get this scholarship because



Brayden Partlow.

I knew that I was getting that community support back. I was excited to get this extra aid to help me on my path toward reaching my higher educational goals!"

Brayden Partlow, another 2023 Hononegah High School graduate is majoring in physical therapy. "The scholarship was a huge opportunity that I was blessed with. It is going to be a tremendous help for the years in school. It was also wonderful to

receive a scholarship from my home community too."

Both students are currently in the beginning of their college journey. Magen plans to join the swimming club at Loyola University Chicago and Brayden Partlow is preparing for his first college football game.

Thank you to both Magen Franklin and Brayden Partlow for discussing the receiving of the Roscoe Lions scholarships with me.

To find out more about the Roscoe Lions or to become a Lion yourself, scan this code to visit roscoelionsclubil.com. Roscoe Lions Club has been serving the community since 1961.



Traveling along the Stone Bridge Trail

By Michael McGinnis



"This is as beautiful as Rock Cut State Park," said a biker along Roscoe's Stone Bridge Trail. "Maybe more beautiful." No motorized vehicles are allowed, but bicycles and pedestrians are. The former railroad easement, part of the rails-to-trails movement, is maintained by Roscoe Township.

The Stone Bridge trail gets its name from the 1882 double-arched bridge over the South Kinnikinnick Creek, the bridge on which Rockton-Roscoe News based its logo. The railroad dates back to the 1850s and trains carried material over a previous bridge to rebuilt Chicago after the Great Fire of 1871.

One easy place to begin your ride (or walk) is at the trail's west end at the park-and-ride lot on the south side of Rockton Road between I-90 and 251, which holds about 15 cars. Another easy access point is the parking lot at Roland Olson Forest Preserve on Atwood Road, which holds about 10 cars. There is not yet an official trailhead parking lot at Elevator Road, between Hope Church and Life Church.

The trail continues for miles after it becomes the Long Prairie Trail when it crosses McMichael Road into Boone County. It passes Brown Conservation Park (and its restrooms) at Caledonia Road and Quail Trap, which begins as Brown Road at Belvidere Road. Many riders start their trip in Caledonia at the grain elevator, where there's parking and a trail map.



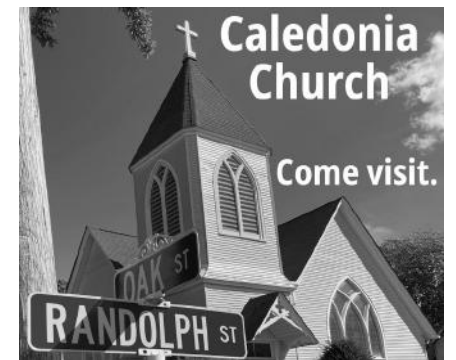
In Poplar Grove, the trail crosses State Street/Poplar Grove Road north of Main Street, so you can stop for lunch at Arturo's Mexican Restaurant. The trail continue east to Capron and ends at the McHenry County line. But the Chemung Trail continues to Harvard. It's all part of the 500-mile Grand Illinois Trail, which includes 200 miles of regular roads and only 300 miles of trails. But theoretically you could bike to Chicago, or at least bike to the Metra train station in Harvard and then ride the train to Chicago.

For most of your trip on the Stone Bridge Trail, you won't be too aware of the outside world, except for traffic as you go under the I-90 bridge and the occasional traffic over the Hamborg Road bridge.



Watch for cars as you cross Atwood Road next to Roland Olson Forest Preserve and as you cross Elevator Road between Poison Ivy Pub and the Roscoe Township offices. You'll cross beautiful bridges and creeks and McCurry Road. By the time you reach Rockton Road, you will again be aware of the outside world.

As a commuter to and from work on the Stone Bridge Trail, I experienced the seasons. April brings wild flowers such as dame's rocket and later, wild phlox. In summer, mulberries fall onto the path. This October, trees are changing color. And this winter... I should buy snow shoes.



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Skinner's Amusements: as old as the Fall Festival

By Michael McGinnis 



For years, Skinner's Amusements has provided midway rides and refreshments at Roscoe's Fall Festival and Rockton's Old Settlers Days.

The 113-year-old business is operated by Patricia and Doug Skinner. Patricia doesn't remember how long they've been coming to Fall Festival, but she remembers signing her first booking with the Roscoe Lions Club at the Wagon Wheel, which closed in 1989.

Now into the fifth generation of the Skinner family, the company was founded in 1910 - the first year of the Roscoe Fall Festival - by Doug's grandfather. George Skinner, a farmer near Crystal Lake, IL, had lost an arm in a machine and had to find another way to support his family. He had seen a steam-powered merry-go-round, says Patricia, and "it sparked his interest. He bought one and his farmer friends helped move it. He would go to sites for two, three weeks." Many were 19th century "picnic groves."

Says Patricia Skinner, "We are what is called 'forty-milers' in our industry." Based in Marengo, most locations are close enough that employees can go home each night, though they also provide bunkhouses. Patricia wasn't raised in a carnival family, but you could say Skinner's Amusements changed her life - she met Doug when he was running the Ferris wheel.

A few of the attractions that have appeared at the Roscoe Fall Festival include the Cliff Hanger, the Lolly Swing, the Power Slide, Scooter, Tea Cups, and the Tornado. The Orient Express is led by a Chinese dragon. Skinners Amusements have more than 35 rides, plus food stands and games, some of which are managed by Patricia's daughter-in-law Renata and her grandson Jered.

Other vendors have their own games and food booths, apart from Skinners Amusements, though many of the businesses work the same events. Skinners Amusements usually sets up at least 20 rides a week, and usually buys a new one about every year.

Besides rides and games, the Skinners will also bring a pizza trailer, a popcorn trailer and possibly fries.

All the locations they serve are in Illinois: three county fairs and many festivals, many of which have been on their route for over 40 years, including Roscoe's.

All employees receive drug tests and background checks, and all rides are state-inspected several times a year. Says Patricia: "New tags are on each piece." The State of Illinois even used Skinner's practices to help establish state guidelines for equipment set up and tear down.

Their season begins May 1 and ends next month back in their home town, with Settlers Days Marengo, October 6-9, a 50 year tradition.

The Skinners remind their riders to please keep the following general safety rules in mind:

- READ and follow all posted rules, height and age restrictions.
- EXPLAIN why children should not stand up, unlock or loosen restraints or exit a ride while it is in motion. DON'T pressure friends and children into going on a ride if they are afraid.
- LISTEN to the ride operator's instructions.
- USE the safety equipment provided like seat belts, lap bars and shoulder harnesses.
- KEEP hands, arms, legs, feet and head inside the ride at all times and hold onto the handles provided.
- STAY seated until the ride comes to a full and complete stop.
- LOOK for the ride or attraction's current permit to operate sticker issued by the Illinois Department of Labor.



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