

Take a Road Trip to Baldwin for

BLESSING of the BIKES



May 14-17, 2026



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Blessing returns to Baldwin for 54th year

Annual gathering draws thousands to Lake County

BALDWIN — A long-running motorcycle gathering that draws thousands of visitors each year will return to Lake County this spring as the Blessing of the Bikes takes place May 14-17 in Baldwin.

The 2026 event marks the 54th anniversary of the tradition, which began in 1972 when a small group of riders gathered at St. Ann's Catholic Church. From those early years — with just a handful of motorcycles — the event has grown into a multi-day regional gathering.

According to the Lake County Chamber of Commerce, which serves as the official organizer of the Baldwin Blessing Fest, the four-day event draws both riders and non-riders from across the country and remains open to the public.

The event is centered in downtown Baldwin and extends into surrounding areas, where visitors can view motorcycles, visit vendors and take part in activities throughout the weekend.

The Chamber organizes downtown vendor areas and “line the fence” opportunities associated with the event, working in coordination with AMVETS Post 1988, the Village of Baldwin, the Lake County Sheriff's Department, local fire departments and the Michigan Department of Transportation.

Officials said the event requires coordination among multiple agencies each year to manage traffic, safety and the large influx of visitors.

The Blessing ceremony, the focal point of the weekend, is held on the final day at Baldwin Municipal Airport, where motorcycles gather for a brief ceremony before departing.

The event is widely viewed as an early-season tourism draw for Baldwin and surrounding communities, bringing visitors whose spending supports local businesses, vendors and services.

From its origins as a small church gathering to a multi-

day regional event, the Blessing of the Bikes remains a staple of the spring season in Lake County.

Before the blessing, Baldwin becomes a sea of bikes

By the time the Blessing of the Bikes reaches its final day, the weekend has already taken hold across Baldwin.

In the days leading up to the ceremony, the village shifts into a festival setting, with motorcycles lining downtown streets, vendors filling open spaces and visitors arriving steadily from across the region and beyond.

From Thursday through Saturday, activity centers along M-37, where the downtown marketplace becomes a hub for browsing and gathering. Vendors set up throughout the corridor, offering merchandise ranging from apparel and leather goods to specialty items, while food vendors and local restaurants serve visitors throughout the day.

The Lake County Chamber of Commerce, which organizes the marketplace, describes the area as a central gathering point within the event, positioned in the heart of downtown to accommodate large crowds of riders and visitors.

The vendor area operates as a structured marketplace, with designated spaces and oversight by event organizers. Officials note that participation is managed through an application and selection process, with limits placed on similar vendors and requirements tied to health department permits and local ordinances.

Vendors are required to check in with the Chamber prior to setup, and camping is not permitted in downtown areas under current village ordinances.

Live music and entertainment remain a consistent presence throughout the event, with performances taking place

at outdoor spaces and local venues across Baldwin.

Among the returning acts, the Scottville Clown Band is scheduled to perform Thursday evening at AMVETS Post 1988, continuing a long-standing tradition tied to the opening of the weekend.

By Friday, the crowd begins to build, with riders arriving in larger numbers and informal gatherings taking shape. The weekend includes opportunities for group rides and meet-ups, allowing visitors to travel between Baldwin and surrounding Lake County communities.

Saturday typically marks the busiest day in downtown Baldwin, when motorcycles fill the main stretch through town and pedestrian traffic peaks. In recent years, sections of M-37 have been closed or restricted to accommodate the volume of motorcycles and foot traffic.

With the event spanning multiple blocks and venues, attendees often move between vendor areas, food locations and gathering spaces throughout the day.

The weekend draws a mix of riders and spectators, with motorcycles of all styles filling downtown streets.

While the Blessing itself draws the largest single gathering on the final day, the days leading up to it establish the tone of the weekend — part street festival, part motorcycle showcase and part community gathering.

At the end, a moment of stillness

The weekend builds on motion.

Engines rumble through downtown streets, motorcycles line curbs and parking lots, and the steady rhythm of arrivals carries through Baldwin for days. Then, on the final morning, it all shifts.

At Baldwin Municipal Air-

port, riders begin to gather again — this time not to move, but to stop.

Motorcycles fill the airfield as riders stand beside them, waiting for the ceremony that brings the weekend to a close.

“To me, it's very breathtaking,” said Marlene Gaitan of AMVETS Post 1988. “It gives me a chill.”

The Blessing, held on the final day, is brief but central to the event. Riders bow their heads as a short invocation is delivered, marking the start of the riding season.

Then, as quickly as it begins, it ends.

“That'll take about 10 minutes, and after that everybody leaves,” Gaitan said in earlier coverage.

Engines turn over, and the stillness gives way to a rising roar as motorcycles begin to roll out.

For many, the moment marks the transition from gathering to the open road.

“It's something you really have to see to believe,” Gaitan said.



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New and expanded events add fresh energy to 2026 Blessing

Tattoo competition, poker run broaden weekend offerings

BALDWIN — While the Blessing of the Bikes remains rooted in tradition, this year's event introduces new and expanded programming alongside returning activities.

A first-time tattoo competition is scheduled for Saturday, May 16, with registration in the morning at the Lake County Chamber of Commerce and judging beginning at noon at Wenger Pavilion.

The competition will feature multiple categories, with par-

ticipants evaluated by professional tattoo artists and awards presented for top entries.

In addition, event listings include an "Open Road Poker Fun" ride and related activities scheduled throughout the week surrounding the festival, offering riders opportunities to travel between locations ahead of the main weekend gathering.

The additions reflect an effort to expand the event's programming while maintaining its long-standing traditions.





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Blessing 2026 Schedule (Baldwin)

Ongoing / Multi-day Activities

Downtown vendor marketplace (Thursday–Saturday)
 Food vendors and local restaurants
 Group rides and meetups
 "Open Road Poker Fun" ride (scheduled throughout the week)

Wednesday, May 13

Bike Night Kickoff
 Live music: The Steve Chapel Band
 Location: Shoey's Log Bar

Thursday, May 14

7 p.m. — Live music
 Scottville Clown Band
 Location: AMVETS Post 1988
 Festival activity begins downtown
 (vendors, motorcycles, food)

Friday, May 15

Noon–4 p.m. — Live music
 Catfish Charlie. Location: Wenger Pavilion
 5–9 p.m. — Live music
 Working on Famous. Location: Wenger Pavilion
 Peak arrival of riders; vendor marketplace in full operation

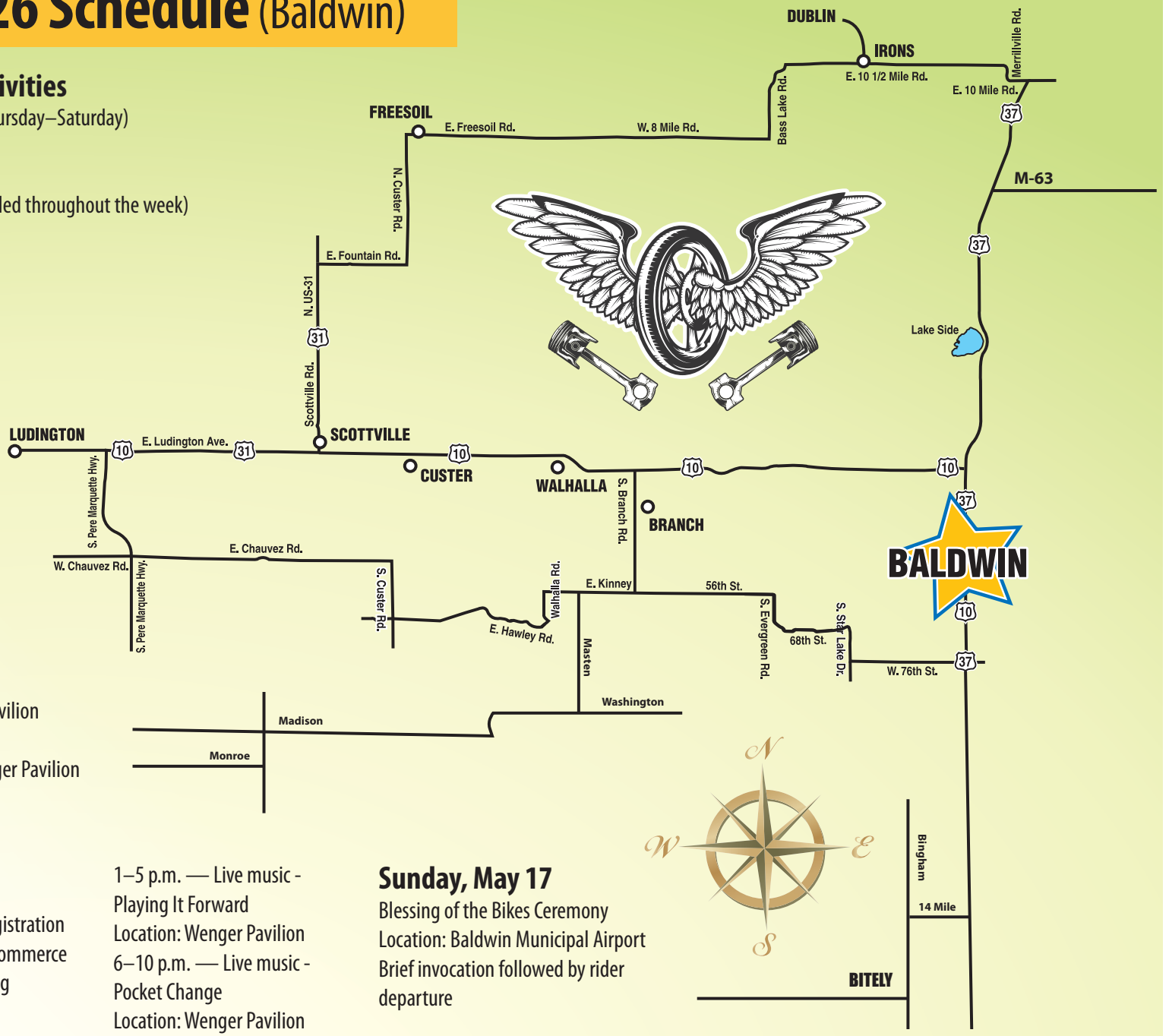
Saturday, May 16

Morning — Tattoo Competition Registration
 Location: Lake County Chamber of Commerce
 Noon — Tattoo Competition Judging
 Location: Wenger Pavilion

1–5 p.m. — Live music -
 Playing It Forward
 Location: Wenger Pavilion
 6–10 p.m. — Live music -
 Pocket Change
 Location: Wenger Pavilion

Sunday, May 17

Blessing of the Bikes Ceremony
 Location: Baldwin Municipal Airport
 Brief invocation followed by rider departure



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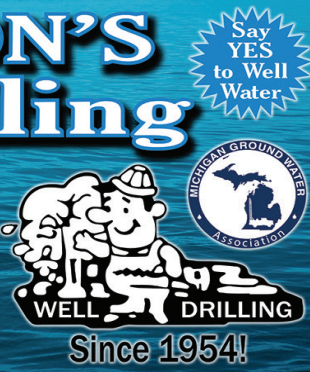
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