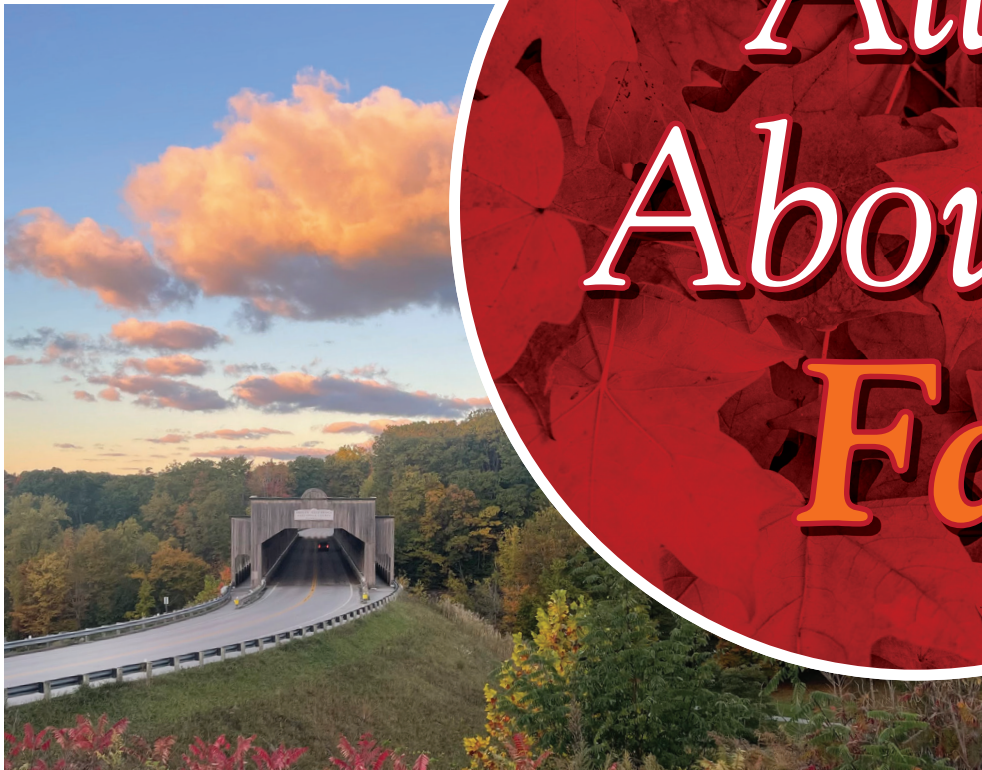




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SEPTEMBER 2025

# All About Fall





# Grape Jamboree to thrill thousands

BY WARREN DILLAWAY

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GENEVA — A major fall experience is on the horizon, with the Grape Jamboree taking over downtown the last weekend in September.

"We are always excited for the Jamboree. It is one of the iconic events," Geneva City Manager Joseph Varquette said. He said many people schedule vacations to return to the city to see family and friends during the Grape Jamboree every year.

Grape Jamboree President Brian Kelly said this event will be especially meaningful, as it is the 60th year. The festival was originally designed to

draw attention to the region during the grape harvest season.

He said there will some excellent entertainment this year, with Richochet, a Nashville-based band, highlighting the Saturday evening slate at 8:30 p.m. Attaboy will perform Sunday at 5:30 p.m. and Hotel California will close out the weekend at 7:45 p.m.

A lengthy parade is scheduled for Saturday and Sunday at 1:30 and 2:30 p.m., respectively. Kelly said he doesn't expect the West Main Street infrastructure project to have any affect on the festival, and parade set up will be the same as last year, using side streets to prepare.

SEE **THRILL**, 7



WARREN DILLAWAY

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FILE PHOTO

Visitors to the Geneva Grape Jamboree check out vendors at the event in 2024 in downtown Geneva.

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# Farms ripe for fall fun

**CHRISTOPHER GILLETT**

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Harvest season is upon us, and with it local wineries and apple orchards are gearing up for fall events and fall customers

South River Vineyard in Harpersfield is hosting the first Autumn Glow Festival, in collaboration with Kaleido Arts and Entertainment Group.

The festival started last week, and continues 7-10 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays until Nov. 2.

South River Vineyard owner Gene Sigel said Kaleido reached out to him near the beginning of the year.

Sigel said he has been interesting in utilizing the 140-acre property to promote local tourism, and hopes it jives well with other fall events in the area, like the Grape Jamboree.

"A lot of setup has gone into this," he said.

Similar events have been done in other parts of the country, Sigel said.

Remy Sigel, of the Sigel family, said tickets can be found at Autumn Glow's website. Ticket prices vary depending on age and day.

Sigel said while Autumn Glow's website lists a Geneva mailing address, the event itself is in Harpersfield. She said there is live music scheduled throughout the festival.

Yu Wang is the artist behind many of the items displayed at Autumn Glow. He said his art has been displayed across the world, including in China, the United Kingdom, Canada, Peru, Chile and Mexico.

"In the U.S., I did more



CHRISTOPHER GILLETT | STAR BEACON

**South River Vineyard is hosting the Autumn Glow Festival from 7-10 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays until Nov. 2**

than 15 different states," he said.

Wang's family has been involved with the art since the 1990s, he said.

The city Wang grew up in, Zi Gong, China, is well known for the type of lantern art being shown at the Autumn Glow Festival, he said.

Wang said he enjoys bridging American and Chinese cultures through his work.

South River is not the only winery offering something interesting this fall.

Emma Kosicek, part of the family that owns Kosicek Vineyards, said guests can enjoy sunflower fields on the property.

"We have over 40,000 sunflowers planted," she said.

Kosicek said customers can check in at the winery, get a drink and head out into the fields to view the sunflowers.

The winery is open noon-6 p.m. weekdays and noon-9 p.m. weekends.

Brant's Apple Orchard owner Brian Diehl said the orchard is open 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, from Aug. 15 to Thanksgiving.

"Weekends are pretty busy," he said. "We'll serve 1,000 people on a weekend day. Weekdays [are] probably 200-300. That's a good number."

The orchard will have hayrides every 45 minutes on weekend from 11 a.m.-4:30 p.m., he said.

"We have a full bakery," he said. "We have some food options; cider, cider slushies, drinks."

Diehl said the orchard is planning a Halloween event, but a date has not been selected yet.

Robinson's Apple Barn is open daily from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Owner Steve Robinson said people can buy apples, pumpkins, cornstalks, pies, jams, jellies and fall decorations at the venue.

The barn serves as a farmer's market, he said.

Robinson said the apple barn sometimes has harvest seasons that can start in July or go into February, and the availability of apples varies from year to year.

"It all depends when [the apples] run out," he said.



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**South River Vineyard is hosting the Autumn Glow Festival from 7-10 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays until Nov. 2**



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# Harvest in the Harbor later this month

**CHRISTOPHER GILLETT**  
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ASHTABULA — The third annual Harvest in the Harbor will take place from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sept. 21 on Bridge Street.

The event celebrates locally-grown food, Harbor Gardens co-owner T Gallo said.

"It's all about us, which means [it is] all about every single person living in this community," she said.

Gallo, one of the event's main organizers, said she and others were inspired to start the event to promote the food sources that exist in the county.

"We actually have a local food movement happening in the county," she said.

Gallo the festival will fea-

ture several smaller events.

"We have cooking demos all slotted throughout the whole day at Harbor Gardens," she said.

There will be other events throughout Bridge Street, Gallo said.

"We have music over by Carlisle's Pavilion," she said. "We have tomato tasting that is free and open to the public to vote on their favorite tomato. We have a sourdough baking competition."

Gallo said there are amateur and professional section to the sourdough competition. It will be judged by former State Representative John Patterson, Plain Dealer Reporter Paris Wolf and Flannel Dog Farm owner Alan Block, who is a

professional sourdough baker.

Both the sourdough competition and tomato tasting are new for the festival.

Gallo said people can also participate in "Stroll Down Bridge Street," an activity where they can fill a card with stamps from places they stopped along Bridge Street.

"There are 10 spots to get stamps," she said.

If the person gets 10 stamps, they can enter into a drawing to win Bridge Street Bucks, which can be used at businesses on the street.

There will be several vendors at the event, including food trucks, who will focus on at least one local food item or product, Gallo said.

"I, as well as a lot of peo-

ple, are really excited about the local food movement, because ... local food is more nutrient dense and far more tasty," she said.

Ashtabula County is becoming well-know for blueberries, Gallo said.

"We also have people that are interested in growing hazelnuts," she said. "Hazelnuts are just a bush — a bush that can be fully producing in three to five years."

Gallo said there will be food from Trumbull, Geauga and Lake counties, as well as some producers from Pennsylvania.

"We have a new pawpaw farm [from Pennsylvania] that we just learned about," she said. "They're new to our area. They have over 500 pawpaw trees."



STAR BEACON FILE PHOTO

**Attendees of last year's Harvest in the Harbor Local Food Festival shop at Harbor Gardens.**

Gallo said plants grown in some of the best produce nutrient-depleted areas that have to be shipped across the country tastes different from locally-grown food.

"I love celebrating local food, because we have

some of the best produce in the world," she said.

"If you ask me, we have the best tomatoes. If you ask me, we have the best peppers."

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# Covered Bridge Festival takes on a different form

BY WARREN DILLAWAY

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JEFFERSON — The Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival will have a different feel this year, but is still expected to draw people from all over the country Oct. 11-12 to experience the varied bridges in the county.

The festival will take place throughout the county at most of its 19 covered bridges, ACCBF Executive Director Ginger Whitehead said.

There will be no central site for the festival this year, which means there will also not be parade, she said.

The decision was made for a variety of reasons, but lack of volunteers was a big part of the change, Whitehead said earlier this year.

The 19 bridges are located throughout Ashtabula County and include the nation's longest, Smolen-Gulf Bridge and shortest, West Liberty Street Bridge in Geneva, and are best seen through a driving tour, according to the festival's website.

Whitehead said the return to bridges will bring people back to the roots of festival, that has been a major event on the county's fall calendar for more than 35 years.

The central location has been the Ashtabula County Fairgrounds and



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON FILE PHOTO

**Visitors gathered** at the Netcher Road Covered Bridge during the 2023 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.

Giddings Park, but it now will be focused at the Smolen-Gulf Bridge and the Harpersfield Covered Bridge, where there is ample parking.

Whitehead said more than half the activities that took place at the fairgrounds last year will happen at the Harpersfield Covered Bridge this year.

She said most of the activities will take place on the south side of the Grand River. Whitehead said the Friends of the Harpersfield Covered Bridge will have presentations on the bridge, entertainment and food options.

Many activities will also take place at the Smolen-Gulf Bridge.

Many visitors come for the weekend to make sure

they can get to all the bridges, Whitehead said. She said there have been a lot of requests for maps and places to stay.

Bean soup will be featured at the Smolen-Gulf Bridge this year, and most of the 19 bridges will have an organization on-site.

Another new element for the festival will be vendors along the path to the Riverview Bridge, which is located under the Smolen-Gulf Bridge.

The Harpersfield site will have a mural children can paint, and entertainment will include mobile performers.

"Come hungry, come curious, and come ready to celebrate our historic covered bridges in a brand new way," the festival's website states.



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON FILE PHOTO

**Amy Wright, of Willoughby, and Jack Bilinski, of Wickliffe,** take a selfie at the Smolen-Gulf Bridge in Plymouth during the 2024 Ashtabula County Covered Bridge Festival.

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WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON FILE PHOTO

Laura Holiga, of Beavercreek, participates in the grape stomping contest during the 2024 Grape Jam-boree in downtown Geneva.



STAR BEACON FILE PHOTO

Visitors shop at the Ashtabula's Farmers Market during last year's Harvest in the Harbor.



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# THRILL: Grape Jamboree celebrating 60th anniversary this year



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Members of the St. Helen Unicycle Team from Newbury participate in the 2023 Grape Jamboree Parade in downtown Geneva.

FROM PAGE 2

On Friday, Sept. 26 at 9 p.m., downtown will change from a busy area to a festival in the matter of several hours. The vendors enter the downtown area and set up shop like clockwork.

On Saturday morning, the festival gets rolling with a blessing by Mike Cole, of the United Church of Geneva, followed by the introduction of Grape Jamboree spokesman Jeff Tanchak at 10:10 a.m.

The always-popular grape stomping contest begins with youth divisions at 11:45 a.m. Saturday, and continues at 12:15 p.m. with adults splattering grapes all over themselves and anyone who gets too close.

The same contests are scheduled for 12:30 and

1 p.m. respectively Sunday.

A key to the weekend festival is the money raised for local charity groups, such as service organizations and churches, that sell grape ice cream and grape pies.

Sunday morning will also feature a community church service starting at

10:30 a.m. That afternoon, a welcome will take place for visiting royalty from festivals around the state.

Geneva's GI's, the Geneva High School Show choir, is scheduled to perform at 4:20 p.m. Sunday, followed by the Sojourner Quartet, a gospel choir, at

5 p.m. Kelly heads a large committee that makes the event occur. "For 60 years, the volunteers have done such a good job, it is hard to improve," he said. He said the committee tries to make a 10% incremental improvement each year.

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