



## Fourth of July Association Announces 2025 Celebration Theme

The Evanston Fourth of July Association (EFJA) announced that the 2025 theme for this year's Fourth of July Celebration program will be "Truth Guides, Justice Unites, Kindness Heals" — just in time for the program's parade registration, which began May 1 and closes June 10.

Organizers are also hoping the theme inspires more donations this year.

The celebration — with children's games in local parks, a fun-run, parade, concert and fireworks at the Lake Michigan lakefront — is the largest annual event on the North Shore. It's also the cornerstone for countless area residents who host reunions, barbecues, block parties and other events on Independence Day and use the celebration activities as an incentive for gathering.

Organizers said they hope the theme will help residents and attendees keep the goals of the celebration top of mind before, during and after the festivities.

"These three phrases really capture the basic tenets of what we can all do to be our best as American citizens," said EFJA President Tracy Alden. "They're simple, but powerful, and underscore what our nation is founded on — the freedoms of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We believe these phrases are the foundation of maintaining these freedoms, and we want to highlight how important these tenets are to us as Evanstonians."

Association trustees will also choose up to three Evanston residents who reflect this year's theme and have been integral to the community as Grand Marshals for the parade.

The non-profit EFJA first began hosting a Fourth of July parade and fireworks display in 1922 as a way to promote safety and community after children repeatedly injured themselves with fireworks in preceding years. Held for an almost-consecutive 101 years — several were cancelled during World War II, the 2020 and 2021 celebrations were virtual in keeping with pandemic protocol and the 2022 Celebration was cancelled over safety concerns following the July 4 mass shooting that year in nearby Highland Park — the hugely popular celebration is produced annually by Association volunteers and funded entirely by donations.

This year organizers are powering up fundraising efforts for the celebration, as donations have waned in the wake of the pandemic.

Prior to 1980, the Celebration's concert and fireworks were funded by the tickets sold to spectators who opted to enjoy them up-close and in-person at Northwestern University's Dyche Stadium. Organizers moved the concert and fireworks display to the lakefront in NU's "front yard" that year to make the event more inclusive and free to all.

“We need to bring in more donations, or the celebration will need to seriously change,” said EFJA Trustee Emeritus Bruce Baumberger. “We need our funding to be much more sustainable, because the organization’s savings can’t continue to support the entire event going forward.”

“The fact that this is an all-inclusive event really gives us a chance every year to expand our community networks across the city, and boost diversity and our neighborhoods,” Alden said. “This year’s theme lets us expand on all the ingredients that make our community strong and point the way to becoming even stronger.”

To that end, the EFJA will reach out this spring to both traditional and non-traditional community groups, organizations, schools, religious institutions and interested residents to put out a call for all eager Evanston residents to join this year’s July Fourth efforts and march in the parade. Parade registration started May 1 and ends June 10.

Volunteers are also needed for the celebration to help as parade marshals and with games in the parks. Those interested in donating, marching or volunteering can sign up [online](#).

For more information, please call (847) 637-5236 to leave a message, or visit [the organization’s website](#).