

Potato Days Returns...

# Fan Favorites, New Events, And Fresh Energy For 2026



Mashed potato wrestling, definitely a fan favorite, will be returning to the Potato Days Festival in 2026.

**By Megan Bauer  
Potato Days Director**

Barnesville's beloved Potato Days Festival is gearing up for an exciting return in 2026 on Friday and Saturday, August 21 and 22. The festival will be blending long-standing traditions with new attractions for all ages.

After a year of adjustments, festivalgoers will be thrilled to see the return of two crowd favorites: Mashed Potato Wrestling and the Golden Potato Scavenger Hunt—both back by popular demand after being absent last year.

Many of the longstanding favorites will return, such as the 5k & Fun Run, Mashed Potato Eating, Strongman competition, Firemen's Water Fights, Mashed Potato Peeling, and the Miss Tator Tot pageant.

Adding to the lineup is a brand-new kids pedal pull event, giving younger participants a chance to join in the fun and showcase their strength. We will also showcase our local talents on the mainstage with performances from Suz Dance, Just 4 Kix, and Tae Kwon Do!

The 3v3 basketball tournament is making its return to the weekend, continuing to build on the festival's growing lineup of competitive and family-friendly activities. Look for bounce houses and kiddie games on Saturday too!

The festival will feature a full day of street fair vendors and food vendors on Saturday, offering a variety of shopping and dining options for attendees.

Rodeo fans have plenty to look forward to this year, as the WOJO Rodeo returns for two action-packed nights of high-energy entertainment, both Friday and Saturday evenings. Attendees can also enjoy a fantastic lineup of food and drink vendors on the grounds, making it easy to grab a bite while taking in the action. The

festival board also extends a sincere thank you to the Clay County Fair for their continued partnership and the use of their space.

The street dance will once again be held Saturday night after the rodeo, featuring Some Shlty Cover Band. They are a high-energy group known for their fun, crowd-pleasing mix of hits and humor, guaranteed to keep downtown lively and the dance floor full all night long.

Leading the charge for 2026 is Festival Board President Dana Bontjes, alongside familiar faces Megan Askegaard, Jens Gylland, Cindy Zander, and Maleah Brakke. Joining the board this year are new members Kraig Archambeau and Jesse Buccholz, bringing fresh ideas and energy to the team.

Megan Bauer returns as Festival Director, continuing her leadership in coordinating the event. The board also is excited to welcome

Maddy Stuvland, who will serve as the Social Media Manager for the festival.

The board extends heartfelt thanks to outgoing members Dave Gross, Brad Fronning, and Josh Wiczek for their combined decades of dedication and service to Potato Days. Their contributions have helped shape the festival into the cherished community tradition it is today.

As planning continues, organizers are encouraging community members to get involved, with new volunteer opportunities available for those looking to be part of the action. Shifts are available in the morning and afternoon of the festival.

With a mix of nostalgia, new experiences, and strong community spirit, Potato Days 2026 (Friday and Saturday, August 21-22) is shaping up to be a can't-miss celebration in Barnesville.



A new event, a pedal pull contest, will make its debut at Potato Days this summer.

# Wagner Memorial Park Campground To Expand



**By Gene Prim**

Over the years the Arnold Wagner Memorial Park Campground has shown enormous success. There is another major expansion planned for the local campground again this summer. That expansion will see the popular campground grow by another two dozen or so camping spots.

That expansion will follow another redevelopment of the campground that took place only three years ago. That expansion in 2023 added 14 new full-service campsites to the 28 that were already available bringing the total capacity to 42 full service camping sites.

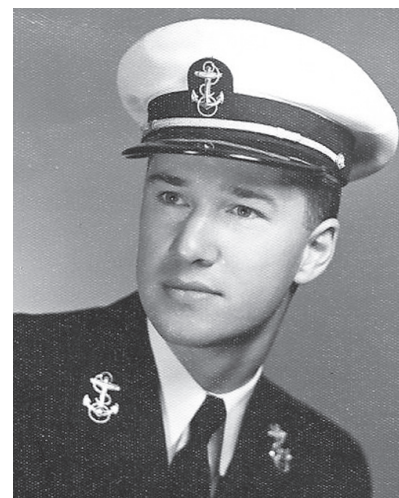
The expansion, however, did not fulfill the demand for sites as 10 to 30 campers are turned away on a nearly daily basis during the summer months due to all of the sites being occupied.

Plans now call for the campground to be enlarged with additional sites added directly to the north of the existing campground. The land available is 8.7 acres of ground that has been farmland up until this time. That additional land, combined with the 22.3 acres already in the park, will bring the entire site to slightly over 31 acres in total size.

The newly renovated park, by the end of this summer, will have sites for about 66 full service campers. Configuration will remain roughly the same with full service campsites on the east end and "primitive" or tent sites on the west end. There is room for about 75 tent campers but that area has never been filled.

The land for the expansion has been donated by the Wagner family children, Richard, Rosemary and Anita. All three of the children have maintained their ties to the Barnesville community where they grew up, the children of first generation Bavarian immigrants Marie and Ulrich Wagner.

The senior Wagners, in 1928, before there was electricity, tractors or telephones, settled on a small farm on the eastern edge of Barnesville. They lived their entire life their and raised their four children on the small farm, all participating in the chores associated with a farm in those days before mechanization. Even after he acquired tractors and other machinery, Ulrich and Marie kept their horses until they lived out their lives on the farm.



Arnold Wagner Memorial Park Campground was named in honor of Ensign Wagner. He was a test pilot for the United States Navy when his jet crashed near Catalina Island in California in 1956. Wagner was killed at only 22 years of age.

The park is named in honor and memory of their son and brother, Arnold Wagner. He was a Barnesville native and standout athlete while a student at Barnesville High School. During his years here he developed an interest and a real love for flying. After graduation from Barnesville High School in 1952 he attended St. John's University for almost two years.

In 1954 he achieved a lifelong dream. Due to his outstanding academic record he had been accepted into the elite Naval Aviation Academy in Pensacola, Florida. It had been a goal of his to fly airplanes and he was now being trained to be a pilot for the United States Navy. Flight training was continued at Navy bases in Alabama and Texas where he perfected his skills and was qualified to land jet aircraft not only on land but also on the bouncing deck of an aircraft carrier.

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The transfer of the land to expand Wagner Memorial Park Campground was completed over the winter. The expansion will include about 8.75 acres of land donated by the Ulrich and Marie Wagner children Richard, Rosemary and Anita. That donated land is located on the other side of the treeline pictured here in the background. Most of the trees will be retained as the grounds are expanded.

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