The Countdown is on for the Old-Fashioned Route 66 Jubilee

By TOM EMERY
Enquirer~Democrat Contributor

The countdown is on for the Old-Fashioned Route 66 Jubilee in Carlinville, as a host of family-friendly activities themed to the 100th anniversary of the "Mother Road" burst into action on Friday, June 26, 2026 beginning with a parade watch at 11:00 a.m.

Bring a lawn chair to the south side of the courthouse to watch the Model A cars roll into town on old Route 66 past the Macoupin County Cannon Ball Jail and Courthouse. The Jubilee on Friday, 6-26-26 is one of the more significant events on the Mother Road this year and Carlinville has chosen to salute our zip code, 62626, and celebrate by taking a look back at small town life in the past.

Headliner music begins on the Courthouse lawn from noon – 6:00 p.m. and kicks off with Chris Vallillo, an Illinois Humanities Road Scholar who tells the story of America and the Midwest through music.

"Music can really connect with people," said Vallillo, a Macomb resident. "It's a vehicle to tell a story, to explore a subject. I'm always excited at how many people talk to me after a performance, to tell me stories to connect them to the music."

Originally an archaeologist, Vallillo says that music can reach people like few other mediums. He now plays 100-150 engagements a year, some as part of the Illinois Humanities Road Scholars program.

Vallillo's appearance at the Jubilee will include a lot of acoustic guitar, including bottleneck slide guitar. Among other instruments, he will bring a 1936 resonator guitar and an 1890s skinhead banjo.

"I think that this kind of music reflects our heritage, and that's as critical as ever," remarked Vallillo. "We need to know where we came from and where we're going, to preserve values and culture for generations and generations."

Another headliner for the Jubilee is Butch Moore of Glen Carbon, whose music integrates acoustic, blues, folk, country, reggae, and originals. Moore says he was influenced as a boy by "singing cowboys" like Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. Butch and Paul Neihaus play from 2:00-4:00p.m. on the Heinz Jubilee Stage.

"Then when the Beatles came on the scene, I really wanted to play guitar," Moore laughed. "I bought my first guitar at age 13 at Grandpa Pigeon's for $29.99. I still have it."

Since April 1985, Moore has hosted the Open Mic nights each Sunday at the Stagger Inn Again, an Edwardsville bar and restaurant that is a local institution. Still an active songwriter, Moore plays around 180 engagements each year, many of them in St. Louis, the Metro East, and southwestern Illinois.

He says the Jubilee audience can expect "a wide variety of Americana music, including the Beatles, Credence Clearwater Revival, Crosby, Stills, and Nash, original material, traditional blues, and traditional country music."

Also headlining is Devin C. Williams, who formerly lived in Girard, but is now based in Springfield. Williams will be on stage from 4 p.m.-6 p.m.

Originally a heavy metal artist, his music is influenced by Mississippi Delta blues of the pre-World War II era as well as his grandmother, who was also a preacher. "I grew up around old gospel music," he said, "and the blues are always readily available."

In January, Williams finished second in the solo / duo division at the 41st International Blues Challenge in Memphis, recognizing him as one of the best solo performers in the blues industry.

He plays 200-300 shows a year, many of them in the Midwest and South. As he appears at the Jubilee, he will be just a few days removed from a two-week tour of Europe, including Belgium.

Williams is known for his unique one-man band approach, in which he plays guitar and sings while kicking a drum with his right foot and a tambourine with his left foot. "People who see my shows tell me how visually fun it is to watch," he said. "The crowds really seem to like it."

In addition, there will be an array of music jammers who will play from 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m. near the north steps of the Courthouse. Some have written original music about Route 66 that will be introduced to the public that day.

For book lovers, head to the Arts and Authors Tent for a variety of presentations including "Model A Fords on the Mother Road," by Tom Emery, "Benld and the Booze Gang," which is Jim Marcacci's new release, "Coal Mines on the Prairie" by former Gillespie resident Harold Rauzi, and "The Real Mother Road" the Edwards Trace, by Anna Sielaff, Illinois Humanities Road Scholar.

Stop by the Writers Guild tent for "book talks" and discussions about their new creative works about Route 66.

Families and kids can check out the "Kids Zip Code Stage," where children 4-12 can walk right up, check in, and sing on stage, tell a joke, or read a poem, story, or a few lines from a favorite book. It's hosted by Becky Miller and Julie Close.

Gangsters and Flappers can dress up, have fun all day long, and try to win Starr Meat Bundles and up to $500 in cash prizes, with judging by crowd applause at 6:00 p.m. on the Heinz Jubilee Stage. Prizes are for best gangster, best flapper, and best couple or group. The emcee of the Jubilee, Dan St. Onge, will host the Elks Gangsters and Flappers contest. For questions, contact the Carlinville Elks Lodge.

Free PBJs will be donated by Carlinville Walmart. Stop by on the lawn between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. near the "Kids Zip Code Stage."

There will also be family-friendly, old-fashioned games with the Carlinville Park District, as well as fun with the Carlinville Methodist Church Croquet.

For the creative art side of kids, join the fun to help "Recreate the Mother Road"- the Edwards Trace. Contact Imagine Rural Arts with questions. Activity will be available from afternoon through early evening on the Courthouse lawn with live music nearby with Devin C. Williams.

There's also "Jail Bird Stories" by Bill McClain, who will be at the Cannonball Jail in the afternoon. To recommend locals for lock up in the Cannonball Jail to raise money for the WSMI Lock 'em Up Public Art Fundraiser, contact Shawn Balint of WSMI Radio or Mary Tinder, Carlinville Winning Communities. Rumors say bread and water will be served to the jailbirds.

Attendees can also take a ride on the Macoupin County Historical Society Tractor Club's people hauler for a short guided tour, down East Main Street and past the Sears Kit Homes neighborhoods before returning to all the fun for the Zip Code Day on 6-26-26.

The fun continues in the evening on the square with a performance by the Carlinville Municipal Band at 6:26 p.m., ice cream from the Carlinville Rotary Club, and other activities throughout the night, sponsored by the Carlinville Chamber of Commerce.

All activities are free and we hope to see you at the Carlinville Route 66 Jubilee. For general questions, contact Carlinville City Hall at 217-854-4076.

STARSHIP Featuring Mickey Thomas to Headline Route 66 Centennial Celebration in Springf ield

Legendary rock band STARSHIP Featuring Mickey Thomas will headline The Route 66 Centennial Celebration on November 11, 2026, at Route 66 Motorheads Bar & Grill, Museum & Entertainment Complex in Springfield, Illinois.

As part of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Statewide Conference and Route 66 Centennial Celebration, the day will culminate in an electrifying evening concert inside the Motordome, bringing high-energy, arena-level rock to the heart of the Mother Road's 100th anniversary.

"This is an extraordinary occasion, and we're excited to bring together the Route 66 community to celebrate the 100-year history of the Mother Road, recognize its champions, and share its enduring legacy with the world," said Casey Claypool, Executive Director of the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway.

"Having STARSHIP Featuring Mickey Thomas take the stage at our Route 66 Centennial Celebration brings a level of prestige and musical legacy that truly matches the significance of 100 years of Route 66. This is the kind of iconic performance that transforms the occasion into something momentous."

STARSHIP Featuring Mickey Thomas has defined generations of rock music with chart-topping hits including "We Built This City," "Sara," and "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now." Known for its iconic sound and powerful live performances, the band will deliver a landmark show befitting the Route 66 centennial.

The Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Statewide Conference will be held from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Motorheads, bringing together Route 66 leaders, tourism professionals, and community stakeholders. Sessions will focus on preservation, economic development, and the future of the Mother Road. Tickets are $75 for Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway members and $125 for nonmembers.

The Route 66 Centennial Celebration begins at 6:00 p.m. and features STARSHIP Featuring Mickey Thomas, along with food, and festivities. Tickets are $150 per person and space is limited. Tickets are currently available to the public.

For updates and additional event details, please visit the Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway event page.

Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network Executive Director Joins National Discussion on Rural Health Transformation

Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN) Executive Director Tracy Warner participated in an important conversation on Perspectives with Pinnacle, a video podcast hosted by ICAHN business partner Pinnacle Healthcare Consulting, to discuss the current landscape and future of rural healthcare.

The executive roundtable brought together healthcare network leaders from across the country to highlight the challenges, opportunities, and innovations shaping rural healthcare delivery.

Representing the voice of rural Illinois hospitals and ICAHN's members, Warner emphasized the critical role rural hospitals play not only in providing healthcare services, but also in supporting the economic and social well-being of their communities.

"At ICAHN, we remain focused on strengthening, sustaining, and advancing rural hospitals through collaboration, advocacy, and forward-thinking solutions," Warner said. "That work is more important now than ever, especially as the federal Rural Healthcare Transformation Program (RHTP) begins implementation this year at the state level."

The discussion reinforced themes highlighted during ICAHN's recent Economic Summit, including the essential role rural hospitals serve as major employers, economic drivers, and community anchors throughout Illinois.

Participants also addressed the mounting pressures facing rural healthcare organizations, including workforce shortages, evolving reimbursement structures, and increasing operational demands associated with the RHTP.

Despite these challenges, the conversation also underscored the resilience and innovation demonstrated by rural healthcare leaders across Illinois and the nation. Through collaboration, strategic partnerships, and shared solutions, rural hospitals continue working to preserve access to quality care and ensure long-term sustainability for the communities they serve.

ICAHN was honored to participate alongside dedicated healthcare leaders and organizations, including the National Cooperative of Health Networks Association. ICAHN also extends its appreciation to the team at Pinnacle Healthcare Consulting for facilitating meaningful dialogue and helping elevate awareness around the strengths and needs of rural communities.

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