

## PRESS RELEASE

### Wilmette Park District Announces Return of PACE Shuttle Service for July 3 Fun & Fireworks Celebration at Gillson Park.

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: June 6, 2025**

**WILMETTE, IL** — The Wilmette Park District invites the community to kick off Independence Day a day early with the annual "Fun & Fireworks" celebration at Gillson Park on Thursday, July 3, from 5:00 to 10:00 pm. This free event is one of the North Shore's most anticipated summer traditions, featuring a whole evening of live entertainment, local food vendors, kids' activities and a spectacular fireworks show over the Lake.

Wilmette Park District is excited to announce the return of the PACE shuttle and offsite parking at Loyola Academy, designed to ease congestion and improve accessibility for this popular annual celebration. **Please note that shuttle service and parking will be limited.**

The Loyola parking lot will open to the public **at 4:30 pm on July 3**, and PACE shuttles will begin direct, continuous service to and from Sheridan Road (between Lake Avenue and 3rd Street) near Gillson Park.

The shuttle system is designed to accommodate approximately 1,200 to 1,500 total riders, but seating is not guaranteed. This limit is based on how many attendees can be efficiently transported back after the event. Return shuttles will operate until **11:00 pm**, for passengers who purchased a shuttle ticket.

#### **Transportation Shuttle details:**

- **\$4.50 round-trip fare per rider**
- **Tickets are purchased while boarding at Loyola Academy**
- **No one-way tickets available**
- **Riders will receive a return ticket while boarding (Needed for return service)**

Attendees are strongly encouraged to arrive early to secure parking and ensure a return ride. All PACE buses are accessible. PACE staff and Park District personnel will assist attendees at pick-up and drop-off points.

"The shuttle service is a critical aspect of the event that we knew we wanted to bring back. It helps make the event experience more enjoyable and accessible for everyone attending," said Dave Merrill, Superintendent of Recreation at Wilmette Park District. "We're thrilled to reintroduce the shuttles and help more families experience Fun & Fireworks without the stress of parking at the lakefront."

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Attendees should also consider carpooling, rideshare, or biking to the event. During the event, Sheridan Road and Michigan Avenue (between Lake Avenue and 3rd Street) will be closed to vehicles to prioritize pedestrian safety and access. Bike racks will be available at Gillson Park's south entrance and Gillson Beach House. Limited accessible parking will be available on-site.

Parking will also be available at Welsh-Ryan Arena at Northwestern University, approximately one mile from Gillson Park; **no transportation will be provided from this lot.**

The evening will feature performances on two stages, headliner One Night Band on the main stage with local opening acts Man on The Moon, Steely Dad and Central High. Performances by the Jesse White Tumblers, South Shore Drill Team and the Barefoot Hawaiians will be at the Wallace Bowl.

Family entertainment, such as face painting, superhero meet-and-greets and roaming magicians, will run from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm throughout the park. **A single firework will be launched at sunset as an announcement, with the full fireworks display to follow.**

Local favorites such as Lefty's Pizza Kitchen, La Cocinita, Mustard's Last Stand and more will be featured food vendors. Attendees should note that some vendors are cash-only, and no ATM will be available on-site.

While the event is free, beach access rules apply: Gillson Main Beach will require a season or daily beach pass. South Beach will maintain regular operations during the day but will open to the general public at 8:00 pm for fireworks viewing. All bags will be subject to search, and sparklers are prohibited. Gillson Main Beach parking is reserved for Parking Pass holders. **No daily parking passes will be sold on July 3 or July 4.**

For more information, including an entertainment schedule and updates on road closures, visit [wilpark.org/FunAndFireworks](http://wilpark.org/FunAndFireworks) and [wilpark.org/WeatherConditions](http://wilpark.org/WeatherConditions) for event details and weather updates or follow the Park District on social media.