

Grow Gillespie

Fourth Friday Event Series Overview

July 24th, August 28th, September 26th, October 23rd, 2026 | 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Overview

Grow Gillespie's Fourth Friday Event Series is a four-month, family-friendly community initiative designed to showcase Gillespie's businesses, celebrate our town's unique assets, and strengthen local connections.

On the fourth Friday of each month—from July through October 2026—our downtown, parks, and community spaces will come alive with special shopping hours, food and drink offerings, entertainment, and themed activities.

Purpose & Goals

Our goal is to create an ongoing, predictable community event that:

- Drives customers to existing and new Gillespie businesses and service providers
- Encourages residents and visitors to spend their Friday nights in Gillespie
- Highlights Gillespie's historic and cultural strengths
- Builds pride in our community and creates opportunities for neighbors to connect

For participating businesses and organizations, Fourth Fridays will offer:

- Increased evening foot traffic
 - A platform to test new products, specials, or services
 - Visibility through Grow Gillespie's coordinated marketing and communications
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Target Audience

- Gillespie residents of all ages
 - Families seeking safe, family-friendly activities
 - Visitors from neighboring communities interested in small-town experiences, Route 66 heritage, and unique local vendors
 - Local entrepreneurs, cottage businesses, and service providers
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Event Schedule & Themes (2026)

All events run from 5:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m., except for additional 10 a.m. events on July 24th.

Friday, July 24, 2026

Theme: “Brick & Mortar Night” – Celebrate Downtown Gillespie

Focus: Traditional storefront businesses and downtown destinations.

Key Components:

- **10 a.m. Streetscape Ribbon Cutting w/ State Officials**
 - Held at the Route 66 Sign
 - Municipal Band to play on the grass area
 - **5 p.m. on:**
 - **Extended Business Hours:**

Downtown “Brick and Mortar” businesses are invited to stay open into the evening, offering special sales, demonstrations, or themed promotions.
 - **Restaurant “Fourth Friday” Specials:**

Gillespie restaurants are encouraged to feature special menu items or discounts.
 - **Welcome to Gillespie Booth (Grow Gillespie):**
 - Information packets on Grow Gillespie
 - Local business directory
 - “Things to Do in Gillespie” and area attractions
 - Information on local services and community organizations
 - **Illinois Coal Museum Program:**
 - Local author **Jim Marcacci** book reading and signing
 - Opportunity to draw visitors into the museum for history and heritage engagement
 - **“Movie Under the Stars” – Colonial Giving Garden:**
 - Family-friendly outdoor film screening
 - Relaxed, picnic-style environment to close the evening
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Friday, August 25, 2026

Theme: Cottage Core Street Fair

Focus: Cottage Core makers, small-scale producers, artisans, and lifestyle brands.

Location: Chestnut Street between Macoupin and Montgomery Streets
(Street closure approved by the City of Gillespie.)

Key Components:

- **Cottage Core Street Fair:**
 - Local Cottage Core vendors invited to host **10' x 10' booths on Chestnut Street**
 - Makers, crafters, homesteaders, bakers, artists, and cottage businesses
 - Local service providers also welcome to set up booths to share information
- **Live Music:**
 - Area musicians providing acoustic and small-ensemble performances throughout the evening
- **Colonial Giving Garden Activities:**
 - Local musicians performing in a relaxed garden setting
 - Farm stand with garden-grown goods
 - Information on how to get involved with the Garden and local food initiatives
 - **"Movie Under the Stars" – Colonial Giving Garden:**
 - Family-friendly film next to the squash and tomatoes
- **Extended Business Hours:**

Downtown businesses are invited to stay open into the evening, offering special sales, demonstrations, or themed promotions.
- **Restaurant "Fourth Friday" Specials:**

Gillespie restaurants are encouraged to feature special menu items or discounts.
- **Welcome to Gillespie Booth (Grow Gillespie):**
 - Information packets on Grow Gillespie
 - Local business directory
 - "Things to Do in Gillespie" and area attractions
 - Information on local services and community organizations

Friday, September 25, 2026

Theme: Route 66 Heritage Car Cruise

Focus: Celebrating Gillespie's Route 66 and automotive heritage through a classic car event.

Key Components:

- **Classic Car Cruise:**
 - In partnership with local car clubs, chapters, and enthusiast groups
- **Food Vendors & Local Businesses:**
 - Food trucks and local food vendors
 - Brick and mortar businesses and service providers represented onsite
- **Extended Business Hours:**

Downtown businesses are invited to stay open into the evening, offering special sales, demonstrations, or themed promotions.
- **Restaurant “Fourth Friday” Specials:**
 - Gillespie restaurants again encouraged to offer themed specials
 - Grow Gillespie provides Fourth Friday cups to participating locations
- **Welcome to Gillespie Booth (Grow Gillespie):**
 - Information packets on Grow Gillespie
 - Local business directory and service listings
 - Ideas for exploring Gillespie and the region
- **“Movie Under the Stars” – Colonial Giving Garden:**
 - Family-friendly film tying into community and heritage themes

Friday, October 23, 2026

Theme: “Big Orange Country” Halloween Kickoff

Focus: Launching the Halloween season and celebrating Gillespie’s colors—orange and black.

Key Components:

- **Downtown Business Participation:**
 - Extended Friday hours for downtown businesses
 - Special Halloween or “Big Orange Country” promotions and displays
 - Encouragement for all to decorate in orange and black
- **Restaurant “Fourth Friday” Specials:**
 - Themed food and drink specials
 - Continued use of Fourth Friday cups provided by Grow Gillespie
- **Welcome to Gillespie Booth (Grow Gillespie):**
 - Information packets on Grow Gillespie
 - Local business directory and service listings

- Ideas for exploring Gillespie and the region
- **Colonial Giving Garden Halloween Activities (Grow Gillespie):**
 - Pumpkin carving contest
 - Treat stations for kids and families
 - Additional fun, family-friendly seasonal activities
- **“Scary Movie Under the Stars” – Colonial Giving Garden:**
 - Family-friendly “spooky” film appropriate for all ages
 - Encouragement for costumes and festive attire

Opportunities for Participation

For Local Businesses & Service Providers:

- Host a Fourth Friday sale, demonstration, or in-store event
- Offer a “Fourth Friday” menu item or discount
- Set up a 10’ x 10’ booth (August Cottage Core Fair & September Car Show)
- Sponsor a portion of an event (e.g., movie licensing, kids’ activities, music)

For Nonprofits & Community Organizations:

- Provide information tables
- Coordinate kid-friendly activities or demonstrations
- Collaborate on themed programming (history, health, youth, etc.)

For Artists, Musicians, and Creators:

- Perform as part of the live music lineup
- Sell handmade or creative goods at booths
- Participate in special features (e.g., art displays, interactive activities)

Support & Partnership

Grow Gillespie will coordinate:

- Overall event planning and scheduling for all four Fourth Fridays
- Marketing and communications (flyers, social media, press outreach)
- Street closure coordination (August) and logistical support
- Central “Welcome to Gillespie” information booth (Each month)
- Programming at the Colonial Giving Garden
- Partnerships with the Illinois Coal Museum and other community partners

We invite local businesses, organizations, and community members to partner with us in making the 2026 Fourth Friday Event Series a cornerstone of Gillespie's community life and a driver of local economic activity.

For more information or to sign up as a participant, vendor, or sponsor, please contact:

Grow Gillespie

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growgillespie.org