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Kick off to **SUMMER**

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Friday Night Series 2026

May 29th – 7:30 PM
Big Caddy Daddy

July 17th - 7:30 PM
RekT

June 5th – 7:30 PM
Auburn Community Band

July 24th – 7:30 PM
The Bulldogs

June 12th – 7:30 PM
Fort Wayne Jazz Orchestra

July 31st – 7:30 PM
Mason Dixon

June 19th – 7:30 PM
Weird Science*

August 7th – 7:30 PM
Hoosier Hill*

June 26th – 7:30 PM
**Fort Wayne Philharmonic Patriotic
Pops Concert**

August 14th – 7:30 PM
Old Crown Brass Band

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The DeKalb Outdoor Theater is a voluntary organization. Performances are supported by generous sponsors, donors and free-will contributions from attendees.

Low-cost summer entertaining

BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Summer is a season for entertaining. But as the cost of consumer goods and even necessities like food has risen in recent years, some people may be hosting a lot less often than they used to.

It's important to keep in mind that memorable entertaining options are not only defined by cost. Sure that professional decorator or expensive catering service may be lavish, but it's possible to host a gathering without putting a strain on your finances. Here are some strategies for budget-friendly summer entertaining.

• **Buffets and bars:** A complex, multi-course meal will be expensive, and some guests may even find it pretentious. Instead, reduce time spent in the kitchen and simplify meal service with buffet stations and food bars. Allow guests to customize their food with different toppings and ingredients, which can elevate even simple fare like tacos or burgers.

• **Signature drinks:** A full open bar is expensive. Keeping a few staples on hand, such as beer and red and white wine, should be sufficient. But hosts also can create a signature

cocktail, make it in bulk and serve it in a pitcher. Spritzers also can stretch wine or liquor further because they are mixed with sparkling water. Remember to also make non-alcoholic offerings available. A pitcher of mineral water with fruit or cucumber slices is affordable and refreshing.

• **Affordable atmosphere:** There's no need to hire a party planner to transform an entertaining space. Inexpensive tricks can go a long way. Lighting is important, and repurposed holiday lights or bistro lights will make the space intimate as the sun goes down. Even tea candles in scattered mason jars will create a relaxing ambiance. Utilize found items for decor, like seasonal fruits in a bowl for a vibrant centerpiece or clippings from the garden instead of costly bouquets picked up from the store.

• **Music:** Music is a useful means to set the mood and help guests feel comfortable, while silent space can be austere and awkward. Hosts can curate a party playlist via a free or paid music app rather than spending money on live entertainment.

• **Encourage contributions:** As a party host or hostess, it's tempting to want to do it

all and take on all of the burden. But it's alright and cost-effective to accept help when guests want to contribute. If friends express a desire to help, ask them to bring a side dish, a favorite beverage or a dessert to defray costs.

• **Low-cost activities:** Keeping guests occupied doesn't have to be expensive. Pass around lyrics to songs so everyone can join in on a group karaoke session featuring familiar favorites like "Sweet Caroline" or Shaboozey's "A Bar Song (Topsy)," among others. Board games, lawn games like cornhole, or even card games are some additional low-cost options. Pool owners have an ultimate source of entertainment without any new expenses.

Entertaining during the summer doesn't have to be expensive. By focusing on company, fun and casual food, hosts and their guests are likely to have a good time.



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Places to enjoy the water

Lagrange County Beaches

Atwood Lake Beach — located on C.R. 700S on the north side of Atwood Lake. Fishing info: Redear sunfish, bluegill, largemouth bass. Public access location: southwest shore off C.R. 745S. Public access facilities: No restroom, no disabled access, gravel parking, hitching post and concrete ramp.

Cedar Lake Beach — east of Howe at C.R. 325E and C.R. 600N and across from Cedar Lake Golf Course.

Shipshewana Lake Beach — on the east side of Shipshewana Lake. Amenities: Picnic tables and playground.

Wall Lake Beach — north of S.R. 120 at C.R. 600N, Howe. Fish for crappie, bluegill, redear, largemouth bass, perch, and Northern pike. Wall Lake's swimming area is part of the LaGrange County public parks system. It is open from 8 a.m. to sunset. Public access on southeast

shore, C.R. 565N. Boat ramp, disabled access, restroom.

Noble County Beaches

Bixler Lake — Kendallville. Amenities: pedestrian, walkway and nature trail more than 3 miles long, two beaches, six open-air pavilions available for rent, playgrounds, fishing, boating, swimming, observation platforms, softball field, campground, tennis court and basketball courts.

Chain O' Lakes State Park — Albion. Amenities: boating with boat launch ramp; nature center; reservable shelters; canoe, paddleboard; kayak and rowboat rental; fishing; hiking trails; swimming; and camping.

Steuben County Lakes & Beaches

Steuben County might be best known for its lakes, of which there are more than 100 (for tourism marketing purposes, the number 101 is used). The county's lakes range in size from a few acres to 1,034

acres, which is Lake James, one of the state's largest natural lakes. A majority of the lakes are in Jamestown and Pleasant townships. That's where the Lake James chain is located, which includes Big and Little Otter lakes, Snow Lake, Lake James and Jimmerson Lake.

Other major lakes in these two townships include Lake George, Barton Lake, Crooked Lake, Fox Lake and Loon Lake.

Clear Lake — in the northeastern corner of the county at 800 acres, is considered to have some of the best water quality in the state, according to authorities with Indiana University and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

Lake Gage — a round, kettle-shaped lake near Orland, is about 332 acres and, like Clear Lake, has extremely high water quality.

Hamilton Lake — which is practically surrounded by the town of Hamilton in the

southeastern corner of the county, has 802 surface acres.

With all of the lakes, along with Pigeon River, Fish Creek and Fawn River

Crooked Creek — it shouldn't come as a surprise that Steuben County has a lot of water. In fact, about 9 percent of the county's surface acreage is water. Some of the county's lakes are highly developed, such as Lake James and Crooked Lake.

Crooked Lake — was one of the earliest in the county to be developed for recreational use. There once were passenger trains that carried visitors to Crooked Lake and Lake James.

Lake James — hilly, wooded shoreline is dotted with lake cottages and homes. However, about one-fourth of the natural shoreline of James, in Pokagon State Park, remains much as it was when it was created by the glaciers.

Pokagon's shoreline extends to its northern boundary on Snow Lake. There, a steep, tree-covered

hill drops off sharply to the water's edge.

Some of the county's lakes remain natural wonders, with minimal human encroachment. Those include the Seven Sisters Lakes at Trine State Recreation Area surround the shoreline. The Seven Sisters, the largest of which is Gentian Lake, are some of the most pristine lakes in the Midwest.

Somewhat more accessible is Loon Lake, west of Angola. Much of Loon Lake is preserved by the Nature Conservancy, a private, international land conservation group. Loon Lake is home to many different species of rare and endangered plants and wildflowers, including carnivorous plants.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources maintains a fish hatchery along the Fawn River in Orland. There, DNR Fish and Wildlife biologists raise fish for stocking in Indiana lakes and also use the facility as a base from which to conduct research.

Bridging the activity gap until summer camp

BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Keeping children occupied during the summer is no small feat. Many families look to summer camp, which can be a fun experience for kids that

they will remember into adulthood.

Many summer camps do not begin right at the end of school, meaning there may be a lull when kids are at home uttering the dreaded words, "I'm bored." Parents

can bridge the gap between the end of the school year and the start of summer camp in numerous ways.

• **Neighborhood fun:** Rotate hosting duties with other parents, and organize scavenger hunts, bicycle

rides, lemonade stands, or backyard pool gatherings.

• **At-home projects:** Use this gap time for hands-on projects like painting canvases, trying new hobbies, learning how to play an instrument, or catching up on chores.

• **Volunteer:** Kids can do community service or participate with a faith-based charity.

• **Short-term camps:** Recreational departments in many towns and cities offer short-term specialized day camps that can help fill some days until other camps begin. These may be specialized toward sports, arts, STEM, or dance. Some run just a week or two.

• **Library events:** The

library can be a great source of inspiration and engaging activities for kids. Plus, libraries often have available free passes for museums, parks and tours.

• **Online platforms:** Children can brush up on some of their school lessons by looking into online classes. Outschool, for example, is an educational platform that offers online classes for kids and teens ages one to 18. Khan Academy is a free educational app with games, books, lessons and more.

Parents looking to fill the time between the end of school and the start of summer camp have various options at their disposal.



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Celebrate the start of summer

BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The summer solstice offers the most hours of daylight all year. According to Space.com, the summer solstice occurs when one of the Earth's poles has its maximum tilt toward the sun. The summer solstice falls on June 20, 21 or 22 in the Northern Hemisphere.

The longest day of the year and the beginning of astrological summer is a source of celebration for many people. Come the summer solstice, the warm weather stabilizes and there are more days of sunshine and mild temperatures. Summer also is a season for school breaks and family vacations, representing additional reasons to look forward to the summer solstice.

People can commemorate the start of summer in many different ways, including these fun ideas.

- **Plan a hike.** With a greater number of daylight hours, the solstice is the perfect time to head outdoors and enjoy the sights. There's no need to rush, as the sun sets late in the evening, giving those who have to work or attend school earlier in the



AMY STOCKLEIN IMAGES

day an opportunity to enjoy a hike after signing off.

- **Take a photo.** Make it a tradition to take a "first day of summer" photo each year to catalog the years going by. Everyone can pose in their favorite summer garb or get coordinating t-shirts.

- **Change the decor.** The first day of summer is a perfect time to change a

home's decor to reflect bright, summery details. Pull out bright throw pillows, switch to citrus or coconut-scented candles to establish a beachy mood and fill a bowl with limes, lemons and oranges for an easy summer centerpiece.

- **Make a summer treat.** Spend the day trying a new summer recipe, such

as homemade ice cream, s'mores, fresh lemonade, or a frozen cocktail (mocktail) like piña coladas. Enjoy in honor of the start of summer.

- **Take a plunge:** Make an inaugural summer trip to the seaside, a pool or a lake and do your best cannonball into the water. Summer is a peak

time for swimming, water sports and boating, so it pays to dive right into these activities.

These are some of the entertaining ways that people can celebrate the arrival of the first day of summer. Festivities can continue over the ensuing months.

Who needs an Indiana Boater Education Card?

BY INDIANA DNR

All boaters at least 15 years old and will be operating a motorboat or PWC but do not have an Indiana driver's license need a Boater Education Card. BOATERexam.com® is a delegated provider for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

The Indiana Boater Education Card is proof that a boater has taken and passed an approved boater education course. As of January 1, 1996, all vessel or PWC operators are required to hold a valid driver's license in order to operate on all Indiana public waters.

All persons who are 15 years of age, or persons 16 years and older who do not have a driver's license, may only operate a motorboat or PWC once they have successfully completed a Boater Education course that is approved by the Department of Natural Resources. They must then carry onboard an I.D. issued by the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles stating successful course completion, at all times while operating.

Many boating fatalities occur because boaters aren't educated about boating safety. The Indiana believes that an educated boater is a safer boater.

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A refresher course in cycling safety

BY METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Cycling is a great form of exercise and a wonderful means to enjoying the great outdoors. The organization People for Bikes says a record 112 million Americans rode a bike at least once in 2024. Youth ridership experienced a notable surge, with participation among those between the ages of three and 17 increasing to 56 percent.

While cycling can be an enjoyable activity for all ages, it is not without risk. Thousands of cyclists are injured or killed in the United States every year, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Bicycle safety tips cannot remove all of the risk, but they can help a person make smarter choices to avoid injury.

Helmet

Every bike ride should begin by putting on a helmet.

The NHTSA says sizing can vary between manufacturers, so it can take time to fit a helmet properly. But a well-fitting helmet is a necessary step to avoid serious head injuries.

Bike inspection

It's important to inspect a bike prior to riding. The seat should be adjusted to the proper height and locked into place. All parts should be secure and working properly before riding. The National Safety Council also advises cyclists to ensure that tires are inflated properly and that the bike is equipped with reflectors on the rear and front pedals and spokes.

Be visible

It can be difficult to see bike riders, particularly at night. That is why people should wear bright clothing or reflective items. Whenever possible, riders should ride



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during the day. If riding at night, flashing lights and reflective clothing are a must.

Choose the right bike

Selecting a bike that fits the rider is key. If it's too big, it can be harder to control. A bicycle shop will have professionals on hand who can guide buyers on bike sizing and help them choose

a bike that is appropriate and comfortable.

Choose bike lanes

Whenever possible, riders should opt for bike lanes, which improve safety for cyclists.

Follow road rules

Cyclists must follow the same rules of the road as other vehicles. The NSC reminds

riders that they should ride in single file in the direction of traffic. Cyclists should use hand signals when turning and exercise considerable caution at intersections. Before entering traffic, stop and look all around for traffic. Stop signs and other signage are not optional; cyclists should heed the rules of the road to stay safe.

Ride solo

Cyclists should stick to one rider per seat, with both hands on the handlebar. No one should ride on the handlebars or on the frame of the bike.

Travel light

If a rider must carry items, they should carry them in a backpack or strap items to the back of the bike.

The season for cycling is starting to heat up. Riders should review the rules of the road and riding safety tips before pedaling away.

Safe Nighttime Boating

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

A sunset cruise can be one of boating's great pleasures.

Cooler air, quieter waterways and star-filled skies draw many boaters out after dark. But experienced captains say nighttime boating demands more preparation and awareness than daytime trips. Reduced visibility changes how boaters navigate, judge distance and spot hazards. With the right precautions, however, boating

after dark can be safe and enjoyable.

Be Seen, See Others

Proper lighting is the foundation of safe night boating. Navigation lights are not just helpful, they are required between sunset and sunrise and during periods of restricted visibility. These lights help other boaters determine a vessel's size, direction and activity. Operators should check that all lights are working before

leaving the dock. Carrying spare bulbs or backup lights can prevent a small problem from becoming a safety issue.

Spotlights and flashlights are useful for briefly illuminating markers, docks or obstacles, but they must be used carefully. Shining bright lights at other boats can impair night vision and create hazards. Maintaining natural night vision is important. Boaters can allow their eyes time to adjust to darkness

and keep cabin lighting low to reduce glare.

Slow Down and Stay Oriented

Depth perception and distance judgment change at night. Objects may appear farther away than they are, and unlit hazards such as floating debris can be difficult to see. For that reason, slower speeds are recommended. Extra time to react can make a significant difference in avoiding collisions or groundings.

Using GPS and charts becomes even more valuable after dark. Electronics can help confirm position, but they do not replace visual awareness. Knowing the waterway in daylight first can make a nighttime return trip safer. Operators need to keep a careful watch for navigation markers. Not all are lighted, and background lights from shore can sometimes be confusing.

Plan Ahead for Safety

A float plan is especially important for night outings. Letting someone on land know your route and return time adds a layer of security. Life jackets must be readily accessible and, for children and weaker swimmers, often worn. Sound-producing devices, such as horns or whistles, are key safety tools.

Fatigue can be another factor. Darkness and long days on the water can reduce alertness. Rotating operators or ending trips earlier can help prevent mistakes. Alcohol use is particularly risky after dark, when reaction time and vision are already challenged. With preparation, patience and respect for changing conditions, night boating can offer a peaceful way to experience the water. The goal is simple: enjoy the view while making sure everyone returns safely to shore.

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Boating with Pets

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

For many boaters, a day on the water feels more complete with a four-legged companion along for the ride.

Dogs and other pets can enjoy boating, but they face many of the same risks as people, along with a few unique ones. Preparation and the right equipment can help keep pets safe and comfortable. Veterinarians and boating safety groups say the key is to plan for pets as passengers, not treat them as afterthoughts.

Start with Safety Gear

A properly fitted pet life jacket is one of the most important items owners can bring. Even strong-swimming dogs can tire, panic or struggle in rough water. A life jacket provides flotation and often includes a handle, making it easier to lift a pet back onboard. Owners should choose a jacket sized for the animal's weight and girth, with secure straps and bright colors for visibility. It is wise to let pets wear the jacket at home first so they



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can get used to it.

Non-slip surfaces also matter. Boat decks can be hot or slippery, and pets can lose footing when a vessel moves. Traction mats can help prevent injuries.

Hydration and Comfort

Sun and heat affect pets quickly, especially those

with thick fur. Always keep fresh drinking water available. Do not let pets drink from lakes or saltwater, which can contain harmful bacteria or high salt levels. Shade is equally important. A canopy, towel or designated shaded spot can help prevent overheating. Signs

of heat stress in pets include heavy panting, lethargy and drooling.

Consider bathroom needs. For longer outings, some owners bring training pads or plan shore breaks.

Training and Precautions

Basic obedience training

can improve safety on board. Commands such as sit, stay and come can prevent pets from jumping unexpectedly or getting underfoot while docking. Leashes are useful when moving around marinas or busy docks but need to be used cautiously on board to avoid entanglement.

Secure fishing gear, hooks and lines, which can pose hazards to curious animals. Store chemicals, fuels and cleaning supplies safely out of reach. Identification is another safeguard. Pets need to wear tags and, ideally, be microchipped in case they become separated from their owners. Before bringing a pet on open water, short trial trips can help gauge how the animal reacts. Some pets love boating, while others feel anxious.

With planning and attention, pets can be happy boating companions. A safe, well-prepared trip helps ensure that both people and animals enjoy their time on the water.

Protecting Wildlife while Boating

BY GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Boating offers a close-up view of nature, from birds skimming the surface to dolphins surfacing nearby.

Those moments can be memorable, but they carry responsibility. Wildlife experts say boaters play a key role in protecting animals and sensitive habitats by operating thoughtfully on the water. Many species depend on waterways for feeding, breeding and migration. Simple choices by boaters can reduce stress on wildlife and help preserve ecosystems.

Keep a Respectful Distance

One of the most important guidelines is distance. Approaching too closely can disturb animals' natural behavior. Dolphins and manatees, for example, may change

course, stop feeding or separate from calves if they feel pressured. Wildlife agencies commonly recommend staying at least 50 yards from dolphins and 100 yards from manatees and whales, where applicable. Boaters should never chase, encircle or attempt to feed wildlife. Feeding can alter animals' habits and make them more vulnerable to harm. If animals approach a boat on their own, operators should slow down, shift into neutral when safe and allow the animals to pass without interaction.

Watch Speed and Wakes

Speed matters in wildlife areas. Many regions have posted slow-speed or no-wake zones designed to protect animals and shorelines. Manatees, in particular, are vulnerable to boat strikes

because they swim slowly and surface to breathe. Even where zones are not posted, slowing down in shallow waters, seagrass beds and marshy areas can reduce the risk of injury to wildlife. Lower speeds give operators more time to react.

Wakes can disturb nesting birds along shorelines or in low vegetation. During breeding seasons, repeated disturbance may cause birds to abandon nests.

Protect Habitats

Fish and wildlife rely on healthy habitats. Seagrass beds, reefs and wetlands serve as nurseries and feeding grounds. Running a boat through shallow grass beds can scar and damage these areas for years.

Using designated channels and

paying attention to depth finders can help avoid habitat damage. Anchoring carefully is important. Whenever possible, anchor in sandy areas rather than on reefs or vegetation. Pollution prevention is another factor. Properly disposing of trash, avoiding fuel spills and maintaining engines all help protect water quality. Even small debris, such as fishing line, can injure birds and marine animals.

Boaters who enjoy wildlife sightings can support conservation by learning local guidelines and seasonal protections. Many areas publish recommendations for responsible viewing. Sharing the water with wildlife is one of boating's privileges. With awareness and care, boaters can help ensure animals remain part of the experience for years to come.

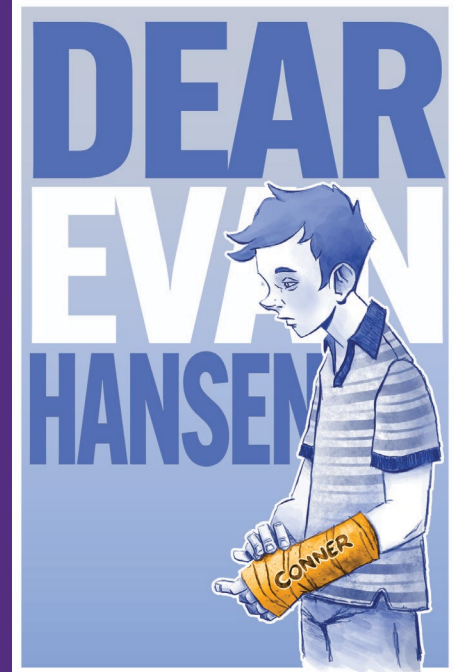
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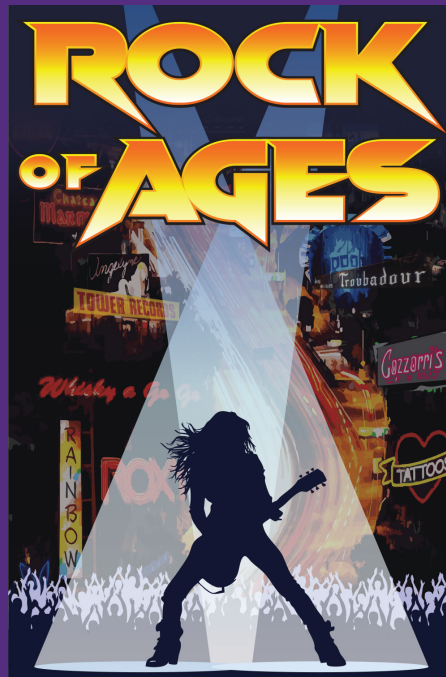
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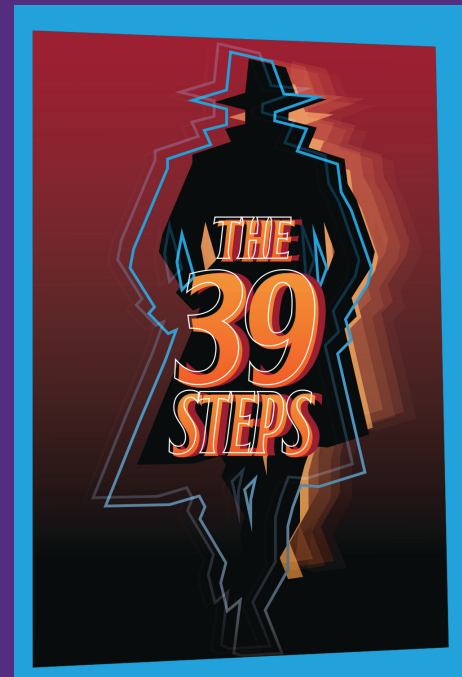
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