

Hope Fest 2026 Set for Sept. 12- 13 to Celebrate 14 Years of Herrin House of Hope Operations

The 15th annual celebration will feature music, food, a 5K, the auto show and biker zone, the Hope Fest Market, family attractions, a children's fun zone, pony rides, a petting zone and more, with all proceeds supporting 14 years of ministry operations.

Herrin, IL, July 31, 2026 – Hope Fest 2026 will return Saturday, Sept. 12, and Sunday, Sept. 13, on the grounds of Community of Faith Church in Marion, bringing two full days of family fun, music, food, fellowship and fundraising support for the Herrin House of Hope.

This year's Hope Fest marks the 15th time the community celebration has been held, while the Herrin House of Hope is celebrating 14 years of operation. Organizers say that distinction is important because the first Hope Fest was held before the House of Hope officially opened, making the event one year older than the ministry it supports today. Hope Fest has grown into one of the area's signature family-oriented fundraisers, helping provide ongoing support for the Herrin House of Hope meal program, thrift store, food distribution center, children's summer feeding program, job training efforts, GED partnership programming and future expansion plans. In 2025, the event raised \$96,000 for those efforts.

Hope Fest 2026 will once again offer an affordable weekend for families, with \$5 daily admission or \$10 weekend admission for guests age 6 and older (5 and under free), along with free parking. Throughout the weekend, visitors can enjoy live music on the main stage, shop the two-day Hope Fest Market, explore Sponsors Row, bid in the silent auction, and take part in a wide range of food and family activities on the grounds. Organizers say the expanded children's fun zone, tethered balloon rides, pony rides and petting zone will be among this year's featured attractions, while the Hope Fest Market could include as many as 100 vendors offering arts, crafts, collectibles and more. Food options are expected to include barbecue, burgers, brats, pizza, Mexican food, loaded fries, fair-style favorites, shakeups, ice cream and other specialty offerings.



Saturday's featured event will be the 3rd Annual Hope Fest 5K Walk/Run and Kids Fun Run, helping kick off the weekend's activities. Pre-registration information is available at hopefestevent.org, and race-day registration will be held from 9 to 9:45 a.m. A pre-race briefing is scheduled for 9:45 a.m., followed by staggered starts for the 5K Run at 10 a.m., the 5K Walk at 10:01 a.m., and the half-mile Kids Fun Run at 10:15 a.m. Registration is \$25 for the 5K Walk/Run and \$15 for the Kids Fun Run. Pre-registered participants are guaranteed a race shirt, while all registrants will receive a free Saturday Hope Fest admission wristband.



Sunday's featured event will be the 6th Annual Hope Fest Auto Show and Biker Zone, again hosted by John Miliani's Big Elvis Rock & Roll Show. Entry is \$10 and includes Sunday festival admission. The auto show and biker zone grounds will open at noon, judging is expected to begin around 3:30 p.m., and awards will be announced from the main stage at 5 p.m. Along with the People's Choice Award, the show will include several special categories, including a Junior Cruiser division for participants under age 16. Organizers are encouraging owners of show cars, classic vehicles, and motorcycles to bring them out for a relaxed day of music, food, and family fun on the grounds.



Sunday will also include the festival's Classic Family Funday celebration, beginning at 12:30 p.m. Organizers say the afternoon will open with the National Anthem, presentation of the colors, prayer and greetings from local officials before an afternoon of music led by local churches, worship pastors and ministry teams. Festival attractions, food vendors, children's activities and other events on the grounds will continue through 6 p.m.

John Steve, Executive Director of the Herrin House of Hope, said, *"Hope Fest has always been about bringing people together for something positive, something family-friendly and something that truly helps our neighbors. As we celebrate the 15th Hope Fest, we're also thankful to be entering the 14th year of Herrin House of Hope operations and to see how much this community continues to care."*

The Herrin House of Hope was formed through a partnership of churches in the Herrin area to help individuals and families facing poverty, food insecurity and other hardships. Over the years, it has grown into an important local ministry and community resource. Today, the organization serves meals Monday through Friday, helping approximately 150 to 200 people each day, or roughly 750 to 1,000 meals a week. Over 14 years of operation, it has served more than 475,000 meals while continuing to expand its outreach across the region.

Over its 14 years of operation, the Herrin House of Hope has made a measurable impact across the region:

- More than 475,000 meals have been served since operations began on September 9, 2013.
- More than 50,000 people served through the emergency food pantry and commodities distribution program since 2014.
- More than 250 students supported through the on-site GED program in partnership with John A. Logan College since 2015.
- More than 35,000 summer meals provided to children age 18 and under through the children's free summer meals program since 2017.
- More than 18,000 volunteer service days contributed this year in support of the organization's work in the Herrin community.

Pastor Troy Benitone of Community of Faith, who serves as Herrin House of Hope Board President, said, *"Hope Fest is both a celebration and a lifeline. It allows our community to come together, give generously, and help ensure that meals, care, and practical support remain available to families who need them in the year ahead."*

Organizers have set a goal of raising more than \$75,000 during Hope Fest 2026 through admissions, food and activity proceeds, sponsorships and donations. They are also seeking at least 100 people or organizations willing to sponsor one day of Herrin House of Hope operations. As part of that effort, supporters are being encouraged to consider the ministry's Sponsor a Day program, which notes that a gift of about 70 cents a day, or \$250 a year, can help cover one full day of ministry support. More information about that effort is available at www.herrinhouseofhope.org and at the information booth during the festival.

Hope Fest 2026 will be held on the grounds of Community of Faith Church, 5208 Meadowland Parkway in Marion. Saturday festival hours will be 10 a.m. to 6

p.m., and Sunday activities will continue throughout the afternoon. Organizers invite families from across Herrin, Marion and the wider Southern Illinois region to come out, enjoy the weekend and help support the ongoing work of the Herrin House of Hope. Additional event details, registration information, tickets, sponsorship details and more are available at www.hopefestevent.org.

Contact: Rev. Dr. Troy Benitone, Hope Fest Event Director
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