



Summer's Not Over Until the Scarecrows Arrive

By Jen Matteis

Summer is my favorite season in Connecticut, and the very end of summer is the very best of the season. The mosquitoes have perished or are on their way out, the kids are back in school, and once again you can make a left onto the Post Road. And while early summer strawberries are a sweet memory, my other favorite red fruit—tomatoes—are just coming into their own. It's an ideal time to hit the farmers' market, which continues every Friday through Oct. 28. Plus, from Beachcomber's Night to the Madison Rotary Carnival, all the way through the town's Trunk or Treat on Halloween night, there's still a host of activities to look forward to.

“Beachcomber's Night is always a lot of fun,” said Lori Fazio, general manager at R.J. Julia Booksellers. “It feels community-based even though it brings in people from out of town as well. We really get to showcase our lovely downtown area and Wall Street. It's a very happy, energetic night.” Held Thursday, Aug. 18, the night offers wine and beer tastings, live music, and special sales and drawings at local businesses.

Fazio noted that the bookstore continues to hold local and celebrity author events for adults and children, too—plus it starts getting its fall books from publishers starting in August. “It's usually a great collection,” Fazio said. “Curl up with a cup of tea or outside in the sun, because we start to get some really meaty, wonderful books.”

During August, outdoor concerts are still in full swing, with the Madison Beach Hotel's Grassy Strip Film & Music Series (films on Tuesday nights through Aug. 30, music on Wednesday nights through Aug. 31), and also Madison Beach & Rec's summer concerts on Sundays through Aug. 21 on the Green. The antique shows, too, just keep coming: the Exchange Club's on Saturday, Aug. 13, the Madison Historical Society's on Saturday, Aug. 27, and the Chamber's on Saturday, Sept. 17—all on the Green. There are also a couple of niche offerings: the British Car Show on Saturday, Sept. 24; and Fazio's kids particularly enjoy the Rotary Carnival each year, held Labor Day Weekend at Academy Street Field.

Later in the season is also an ideal time to hit the beach or enjoy a park without the crowds.

“Long Island Sound waters are at their warmest in September and beaches clear out as students return to school,” noted First Selectman Tom Banisch. “It's easier to get a table in our great restaurants, since the summer crowds are gone.”

It's also a great time to be a bird watcher, especially at Hammonasset Beach State Park. Migration begins in August, but later is better.

The Audubon Shop's bird walks (\$5) run Saturday, Sept. 10 through the Saturday before Thanksgiving at Hammonasset Beach State Park. While you're there, check out the new Meigs Point Nature Center. The turtle tank in particular is spectacular—don't miss it! That drop in mosquitoes also means it's the perfect time to hit the trails. Book a campsite or cabin at Hammonasset for a home base, and explore from there.

Come fall, businesses start coming up with ideas for the Chamber's annual scarecrow contest, which draws locals and out-of-towners into their shops to vote for their favorites starting Saturday, Oct. 8. "I love that—even just as a grownup who lives in town, I always get a kick out of the scarecrows and even my teenage daughters do," said Fazio.

Janet Connolly from the Audubon Shop agreed. "That is just a great community event," she said of the scarecrow contest. "People come from all over. It's just something fun that brings people out and decorates the downtown."

Finally, the return of kids to school means the return of school sports, too.

"With school starting up, there is a full schedule of sporting events including Madison's own 'Friday Night Lights' football games as well as soccer and cross country," said Banisch. "Youth sports are in abundance as the leagues crowd everyone's schedules on Saturdays and Sundays."

Banisch added one last thing we can all look forward to: "This early autumn, we hope to see the completion of the Madison Center Project as the new light posts are illuminated and the unsightly utility poles and overhead wires are removed," he said.

With a shiny, brand-new downtown, it sounds like next summer could be even better, too.

For more information on happenings in the Madison, CT area, please contact the Madison Chamber of Commerce at madisonct.com or 203.245.7394.