

# Armstrong: Family fun for everyone at DeKalb Kite Fest

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Sept. 5, 2017

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This weekend we will welcome hundreds of families to our area for Northern Illinois University Family Weekend and the 12th annual DeKalb Kite Fest.

There are many activities that will take place on and off campus to showcase DeKalb County attractions, highlighted by NIU's 2:30 p.m. Saturday football game against Eastern Illinois at Huskie Stadium.

DeKalb Kite Fest follows on Sunday with thousands of visitors and residents gathering to look upward and celebrate the thrill of seeing kites of all shapes, sizes and colors fill our skies.

The DeKalb County Convention & Visitors Bureau is proud to continue to host this fall tradition. Kite Fest is made possible by our sponsors, volunteers and the amazing kite pilots that Dave Zavel, from Chicago Kite, recruits to put on this wonderful, whimsical day.

Kite Fest began when Nathan Overman, a young boy at the time, wrote a letter to then-Mayor Frank Van Buer asking for support to bring a kite festival to his hometown. Members of his family were kite enthusiasts and had attended festivals in other cities.

They reached out to Chuck Siebrasse, executive director of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce for advice and support with the first festival. I attended it in 2006 as a resident, then was handed the reins to the event the very next day, which was my first on the job with the DeKalb Chamber.

Since then, many things have changed. I still sit on the board of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and serve as an ambassador. The DeKalb County CVB incorporated in 2007 and is now its own 501 C-6. I am its executive director and we are the designated marketing organization for the county and a certified visitor bureau with the state of Illinois.

Chuck has since passed, but I never set foot on that field at Kite Fest without keeping him in my heart and knowing that he is smiling down on us all. Nathan Overman is now a young adult and joins us every year.

Grab your blankets, lawn chairs, families, friends and kick back with us for Kite Fest from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 10. It will be held on the NIU campus "North 40," which is at the corner of Lucinda Avenue and Kishwaukee Drive. There is a \$3 fee per carload to park to

offset the cost of renting the parking lots at NIU. That's a small price to pay for a beautiful day spent outdoors with family and friends enjoying all the entertainment.

Kite Fest takes us all back to a simpler time; however, many of these kites aren't simple to fly. It takes work and talent to fly a kite that is more than 100 feet in length. There will be dancing kites, stunt kites, parrot kites, kitten kites, octopus kites and much more to enjoy.

Those attending can bring their own kites and fly them as long as they respect the rules and fly only in the designated areas. Only the professional pilots are allowed in the main field, which is coned off for safety. Please honor the boundaries.

The kids will be able to make kites for free with the help of our volunteers and Art Attack. There will be other fun activities for them to do at nonprofit and sponsor booths throughout the day.

The much-anticipated candy drop is always a hit with the kids. We can't predict the time of the drop. Mother Nature determines that, depending on the wind that day. We normally try to do the candy drop after 1 p.m.

Bring your own picnic baskets or buy food or treats from one of our two vendors, Sweet Dream Desserts and Cream King.

We encourage everyone to take pictures and videos and tag them #DeKalbKiteFest and post on our Kite Fest Facebook page. We want to connect with everyone to share this family-friendly event.

Manja string or any other type of glass covered string is prohibited. If you are flying one of these kites, security will be called and you will be asked to leave the event.

A special thanks to Doug Nelson, Kite Fest co-chairman, and Stacie Overman, CVB office administrator, for all their hard work that goes on behind the scenes to make the day a success and fun for all!

Let's hope for clear skies and enough wind to keep the kites soaring high.

To check out all events in DeKalb County, visit [dekalbcountycvb.com](http://dekalbcountycvb.com).

- Debbie Armstrong is executive director of the DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

