

The Vollrath Bowl Lantern Parade: Then & Now

Background

The Sheboygan County Museum's Vollrath Bowl Lantern Parade project repurposes a treasured tradition from the past to bring people together now with hands-on history. From 1935 to 2011, Sheboygan's annual lantern parade at Vollrath Bowl marked the end of summer. The recreation department's summer playground programs provided children with a structured place to gather while school was out. Part of these programs involved making small, individual lanterns and large, multi-carrier lanterns to showcase the different locations and themes.

At the end of the summer, for one evening those children would transform Vollrath Bowl into a "sea of lights" to say goodbye to summer and welcome the new school year. Live music, drumlines, flashlight dances, skits, and other activities would expand interests for performers and audiences before the big moment.

In 2021, the Sheboygan County Museum made a children's lantern parade part of a larger onsite program. Starting in 2024, the Museum reimagined how a lantern parade with historical context at Vollrath Bowl could open wider access to the Museum's mission. Goals now include connecting generations through a celebration of recent history and showcasing the power of children to leave a lasting impact on history, and vice versa. Our program helps children build formative memories that support a community-centered mindset. As the lantern parade continues to evolve, attendance has grown to approximately 250 walkers, and has grown spectatorship, making workshops, and partnerships as well.

Mission-driven

The Sheboygan County Museum fulfills its mission— *to collect, preserve, and educate about the history of Sheboygan County*— through exhibits, collections, education and public programs. The Museum opens wider access to this mission with lantern parade programs with free programs in satellite locations.

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