

YOUR **CHICAGO**

# SUMMER

**GUIDE 2025** FOR FAMILY FUN

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for Ice Cream  
Adventures**

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Summer Days Out**

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Than 3 Hours Away**

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**THIS IS HOW WE  
LEARN**



CHICAGO  
**CHILDREN'S**  
MUSEUM

At Navy Pier • [CCM.org](http://CCM.org)



# Chicago Parents, What's On Your Summer Bucket List?

From live music and musicals to mural walks and wild animals, these Chicago-area parents are sharing the can't-miss moments they're looking forward to with their families. Need inspiration? Start your summer bucket list right here.



***"Kayaking at Skokie Lagoons in the summer is an awesome way to see the beauty of the North Shore."***

- Cindy Hwang,  
@chicagofamilyadventures



***"My daughter is 7 and a die-hard Descendants fan so I cannot wait to take her to the Disney's Descendants & Zombies: Worlds Collide Musical on Aug. 6 at the Allstate Arena in Rosemont. I'm not embarrassed to admit that I actually enjoyed the movies too!"***

- Kim Griffiths & Kyle Buchta,  
@momsofalltrades



***"Every summer, I sit my littles down and we create the Mendoza Crew Summer Bucket List! We do fun things like go to the park, trip to new ice cream places, head to a museum, but also cultural experiences like Pilsen mural walks and the children love checking the items off the list."***

- Brenda Perez Mendoza,  
@maestramendoza



***"I can't wait to take my kids to Windy City Smokeout. Kids 10 and under get free general admission. We always go early, and enjoy the barbecue, fun photo opportunities and country music - of course!"***

- Rachael Fritz, @parentingonmars

## CHICAGO PARENT

We help families make the most of their time together with clear, practical recommendations on what to do, where to go and why it matters.

We Want  
to Hear  
from You!

GENERAL QUESTIONS  
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**WOMEN  
OWNED™**

Photo by Big Star

# Kid-Friendly Patios and Rooftops *Perfect for Summer*

BY CHICAGO PARENT STAFF

Looking for the best kid-friendly patios in Chicagoland where the whole family can relax and dine outdoors? These standout spots offer everything from play spaces and s'mores kits to menus kids love, making al fresco dining fun for everyone.

## **Big Star** CHICAGO

With three Chicago locations, this taco spot offers hip patios, mix-and-match tacos, kid-friendly portions, and refreshing drinks like margaritas, palomas, and daiquiris for adults.

## **Caffe Oliva** CHICAGO

Caffe Oliva on Ohio Street Beach feels like a mini getaway—kids play in the sand while adults enjoy beachy cocktails and Mediterranean-inspired bites.



## Kaiser Tiger CHICAGO

This West Loop spot features a spacious beer garden with games like ping-pong and bocce, picnic seating, and 20+ rotating beers—perfect for all-day relaxing.



## 302 Wheaton WHEATON

This burger hotspot features a family-friendly patio, draft beers, milkshakes (boozy ones for adults!), and fun extras like kid-friendly movie nights and Dole Whip Wednesdays.

## Elmhurst Brewing Company ELMHURST

Elmhurst Brewing Company is a family-friendly brewery with a kids' menu and indoor play area, plus craft beers and pub food for parents to enjoy.

## Empire Burgers & Brew NAPERVILLE

Empire in downtown Naperville serves up massive burgers and kid-sized patties, all enjoyed on a scenic rooftop overlooking the Naperville Riverwalk.

## Open Outcry Brewing Company CHICAGO

Open Outcry's South Side rooftop offers board games for kids, street-themed eats, specialty brews, and communal seating for relaxed, family-style fun in the open air.

## Cortland's Garage ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Enjoy pub grub and kids fare on a spacious brick patio with TVs, string lights, and seasonal decor—perfect for a family meal and game day vibes.

## Girl in the Park ORLAND PARK

Girl in the Park's spacious patio welcomes kids and dogs, with a "Lil Humans" menu and tasty adult options like seared salmon, ribs, and chicken 'n' biscuits.

## Park & Field CHICAGO

Park & Field in Logan Square offers a massive patio with bocce, board games, bubbles, and chalk—plus kid- and dog-friendly menus and s'mores by the fire.



Caffe Oliva  
CHICAGO





# Fun-Filled Chicagoland Ice Cream Treats

BY KATINA BENIARIS

**I**ce cream is a timeless treat loved by all ages, and Chicago takes it up a notch with over-the-top creations the whole family will love. From animal-themed scoops to waffle-topped delights, here are four unique spots to add to your ice cream adventure list.

## Bubble waffle sundaes worth the sugar rush

### MULTIPLE LOCATIONS IN CHICAGOLAND

Eiffel Waffle is famous for bubble waffle sundaes—warm, fluffy waffles folded into cones, filled with ice cream, toppings, and drizzles—or try their epic Waffle Towers.



## Eat adorable animal gelato cones at Eli's Ark

### CHICAGO

This Logan Square gelato shop serves up handcrafted scoops turned into adorable animal characters—like pandas and bunnies—with easy ordering and fun “piggy-backing” cone options.

## Build your own taco at Dessert Dealer

### CHICAGO

Pizza Parlor's dessert menu features tacolatos—waffle shell dessert tacos with flavors like Cookie Monster—or build your own with customizable shells, gelato, sauces, and toppings.

**DAIRY  
FREE**

## No dairy worries with Vaca's over-the-top sundaes

### CHICAGO

Vaca's Creamery serves up fun, flavorful vegan ice cream perfect for kids with dairy restrictions—think loaded sundaes, cookie dough, brownie bites, and seasonal creations.







# GROWING MINDS, GOING green

SUMMER *at* CPL  
JUNE 21 – AUGUST 3

Free and fun activities  
for all ages.

[chipublic.org/summer](http://chipublic.org/summer)



This program was made possible in part by generous donors  
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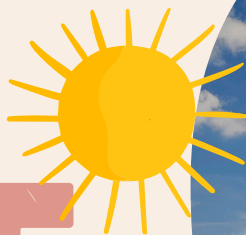




# HOT PICKS FOR COOL SUMMER FUN

BY KATINA BENIARIS

**S**chool's out, the sun's shining and Chicagoland is bursting with ways to make this summer unforgettable. From sunflower fields to new attractions, we've rounded up the season's best family-friendly fun you won't want to miss.



## Spider-Man swings into Griffin Museum of Science and Industry

The iconic superhero is making a stop at the Windy City! Catch "Marvel's Spider-Man: Beyond Amazing – The Exhibition" to learn more about the history and legacy of Spider-Man. *Photo by Joseph Eley*

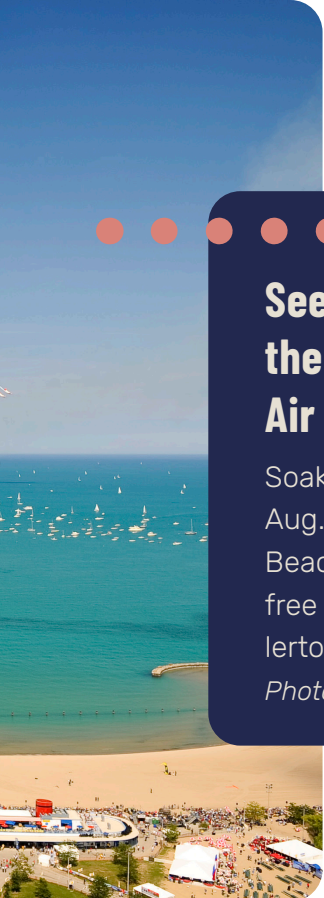
## ☀ Morton Arboretum showcases giant, colorful sculptures

Families can take a nature walk to see deer, snails and dragonflies a.k.a "Vivid Creatures." It's like stepping into a storybook filled with giant, magical wildlife.

## ☀ Par-King offers a wacky and fun mini golf experience

Putt through 18 wild holes with moving obstacles, water features and quirky landmarks at this whimsical course in Vernon Hills.





## See planes twirl in the sky at Chicago Air and Water Show

Soak up the sun and thrills Aug. 16-17 at North Avenue Beach for summer's biggest free show, visible from Fullerton to Oak Street.

*Photo by Patrick Pyszka*



## ★ Pedal into adventure at Big Marsh Park

Tackle six thrilling bike trails with wooden obstacles, dirt paths, pump tracks and jumps at this action-packed outdoor bike park in the South Side.

## ★ Step into magic at the Harry Potter Store

Right on the Magnificent Mile, the Harry Potter Shop Chicago enchants families with Butterbeer, wizard merch, interactive fun and Windy City-themed magic.

## ★ Pick your own berries at Stade's Farm & Market

Nothing says summer like juicy strawberries and sunshine! Head to Stade's in McHenry County to pick your own berries and enjoy the kid-friendly farm attractions.



*Photo by Stade's Farm Market*



## ● Take a Chicago River tour on a historic fireboat

Take in skyline views aboard the historic Fred A. Busse, a former Chicago Fire Department fireboat that served from 1937 to 1981.

*Photo by Chicago Fireboat Tours*



# Splash-Tastic Spraygrounds

BY CHICAGO PARENT STAFF

Chicagoland is home to some of the best splash pads and spraygrounds, offering interactive water play with fountains, misters, and more—perfect for cooling off with kids on hot days.

## ● Spray 'N Play

### BUFFALO GROVE

Buffalo Grove Spray 'N Play, one of the area's largest, features 20+ water toys, cannons, and rainbow arches. Open over 70 degrees, \$4 entry; under 1 free.

## ● Prospect Park Splash Pad

### PARK RIDGE

Kids will go nuts for this pirate-themed sprayground, complete with a pirate ship to explore, squirting crabs, and barrels and dripping fish overhead! \$8/non-residents, \$5/residents

## ● Water Playground

### SKOKIE

This giant multi-level splash zone features jet sprays, a twisty slide, and a 500-gallon dump bucket. \$10/Skokie residents, \$11 Evanston residents, \$18/non-residents; kids under 2 are free.



*Photo by Prospect Park Splash Pad*



*Photo by Buffalo Grove Park District*





**Crown Fountain,**  
Patrick L. Pyszka,  
City of Chicago

## ● **The Hub at Berens Park** **ELMHURST**

This 6,000 sq. ft. splash park features 9 interactive water elements. \$6/resident adults 16+, \$4/resident youth 2-16, \$8/non-resident adult 16+, \$6 non-resident youth 2-16, free/children 2 and under.

## ● **Splash Island** **OAK BROOK**

Splash Island in Oak Brook offers a zero-depth pool, wide slides, dumping buckets, and jets—everything kids love. \$14/non-residents, \$10/residents, free for kids ages 2 and under

## ● **Ty Warner Spray Park** **WESTMONT**

Opening July 2025, Westmont's sprayground features mushroom waterfalls, dumping buckets, and a misting whale tail. \$7/non-resident children, \$5/resident children, adults free with paid child

**FREE**

## ● **Adams Playground Park** **CHICAGO**

Tucked on Seminary Ave., this Lincoln Park sprayground features playful water pipes, misting wheels, and a toddler-friendly slide in a peaceful, tree-lined setting.

## ● **Crown Fountain in Millennium Park** **CHICAGO**

Crown Fountain in Millennium Park features 50-foot towers with faces that "spout" water—an iconic, must-visit splash spot for Chicago kids in summer.

## ● **Francis Toby Anderson Park** **HOMETOWN**

This splash pad park offers water fun for kids and shaded picnic tables for parents—plus a zipline swing for extra playground excitement.

## ● **Dragonfly Landing** **LISLE**

Dragonfly Landing at PrairieWalk Pond features a nature-themed play area with a treehouse, lily pads, a free splash pad, and a green-roof shelter for families.



Photo by Nick Ulivieri



# Boom! Chicagoland Fireworks All Summer Long

BY KATINA BENIARIS

Summer nights in Chicagoland shine brighter with fireworks lighting up everything from the city skyline to suburban ballparks. Whether it's Navy Pier or a minor league game, these dazzling displays offer budget-friendly fun for the whole family.

## Navy Pier Fireworks CHICAGO

Navy Pier's free summer fireworks light up the Chicago skyline every Wednesday at 9 p.m. and Saturday at 10 p.m., synced to music for a dazzling show. Make a day of it with rides, museums, sweet treats, and family fun before settling in for the lakeside spectacle.

## The Chicago Dogs ROSEMONT

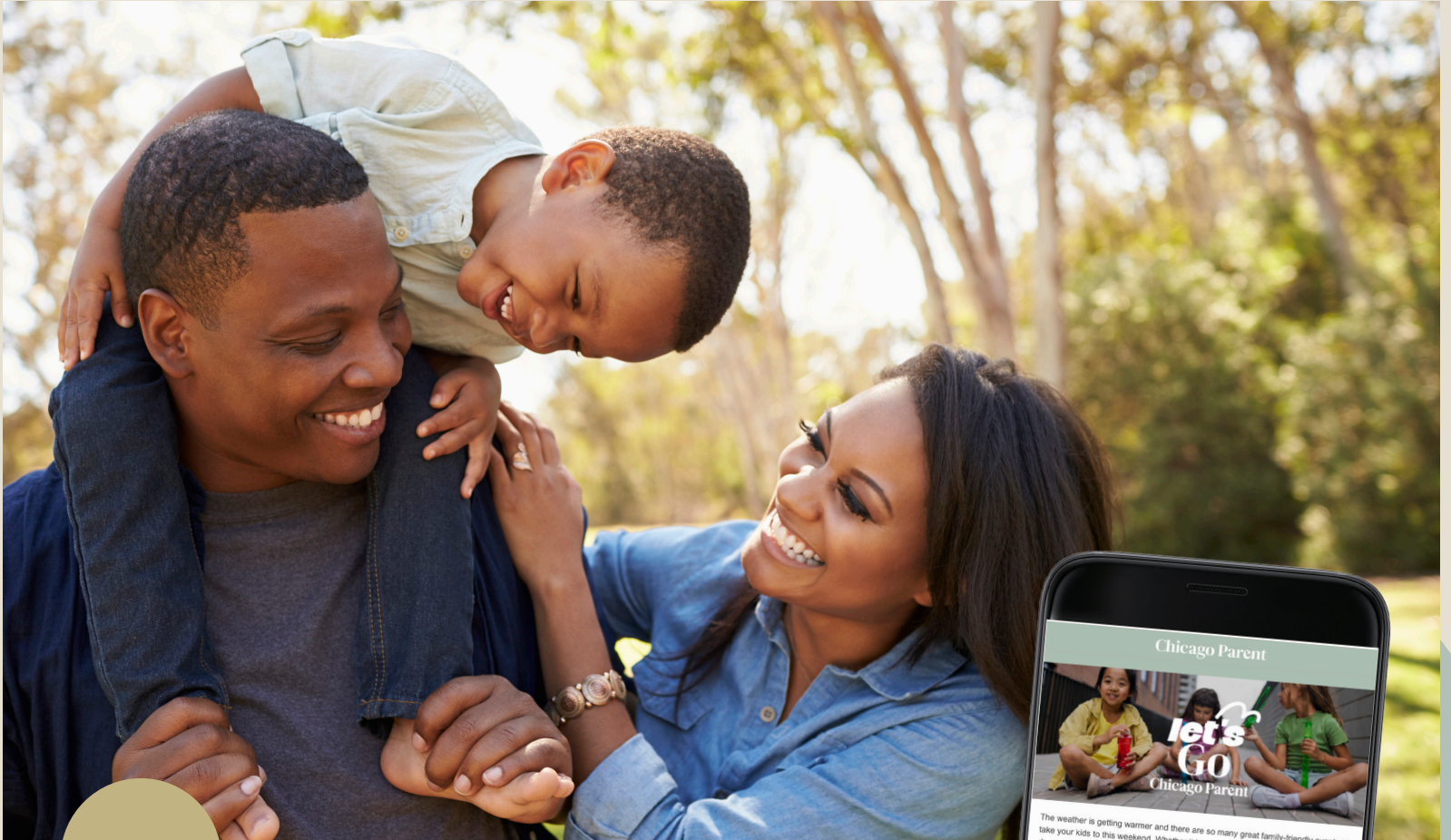
Looking for a home-run night out with the kids? Head to a Chicago Dogs game in Rosemont, where Saturday home games feature fun theme nights and end with a free fireworks show. Don't miss Family Sundays, with on-field catch and player autographs for an unforgettable day at the ballpark.

## Kane County Cougars GENEVA

Hit it out of the park this summer with the Kane County Cougars, where select games end with full-length fireworks shows. Enjoy extra fun with the Kid-Zone, themed nights like Bluey and American Girl, or upgrade to the Dugout Experience for front-row fireworks memories under the stars.



# Take your weekends to the next level!



Want more weekend fun without all the searching and sorting? Sign up for Chicago Parent's Let's Go newsletter and get the weekend's top picks, day-by-day event breakdowns and more right in your inbox, once a week.

[ChicagoParent.com/Newsletters](https://chicagoparent.com/newsletters)



# Nearby Summer Road Trips For Chicago Families

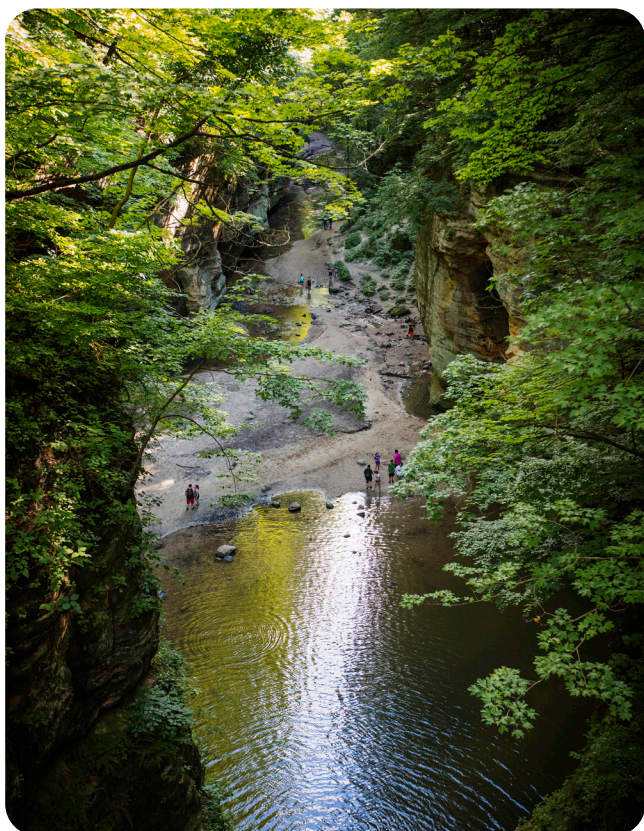
BY **KATINA BENIARIS**

**E**scape the city with family-friendly summer getaways near Chicago—perfect for beach days, hikes, small towns, and lake fun, all within a short drive.



## Indiana Dunes National Park, Indiana

Chicago families can explore Indiana Dunes National Park with kid-friendly trails and visit livestock at Bailly Homestead and Chellberg Farm, a charming 1890s Swedish farmstead.



## Starved Rock State Park, Illinois

Starved Rock is a must-visit for families this summer, with easy trails, canyons, waterfalls, and nearby Matthiessen State Park for more rugged hiking adventures.

*Photo by Illinois Office of Tourism*



## Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Milwaukee offers family fun with the zoo, Discovery World, and lakefront paths. Catch the Brewers vs. Cubs or Sox for a perfect nearby sports day!

*Photo by Travel Wisconsin*



## Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

This classic lake town offers boating, ice cream, lake cruises, and scenic Shore Path walks. Visit Safari Lake Geneva and explore the charming, family-friendly downtown.

*Photo by Travel Wisconsin*



## Saugatuck, Michigan

Saugatuck offers summer fun with Oval Beach, boat rides on Kalamazoo Lake, dune rides, and a charming downtown filled with shops, treats, and family-friendly dining.

## Galena, Illinois

Escape to Galena for 19th-century charm, historic tours, Chestnut Mountain's Alpine Slide, and stunning views at Thunder Bay Falls—a perfect family-friendly summer getaway.

*Photo by Illinois Office of Tourism*

## Fort Wayne, Indiana

Head to Fort Wayne for a family-friendly city escape! Enjoy the zoo, Science Central, Botanical Conservatory, and lakefront fun at Promenade Park with games and trails.





SAY HELLO TO  
SUMMER WITH THESE

# FAMILY FESTIVALS

BY KARI ZAFFARANO

**K**ick off summer in Chicago-land with family-friendly festivals featuring carnival rides, tasty food, live music, and cultural celebrations—fun for everyone!



## **Lincoln Park Greek Fest at St. George Greek Orthodox Church**

**JUNE 6-8, 2025 | CHICAGO**

Celebrate authentic Greek cuisine, music, dance performances, and Greek culture and Hellenic pride. There will also be a craft fair all weekend. \$10/suggested donation.

## **Annual 57th Street Art Fair**

**JUNE 7-8, 2025 | CHICAGO**

This 77th anniversary with a celebration featuring nearly 200 artists, live music, kids activities and more.

## **Highland Games & Scottish Festival at DuPage County Fairgrounds**

**JUNE 13-14, 2025 | WHEATON**

Enjoy activities and attractions from the Celtic rock stage to Highland Dancing to the Dogs of Scotland. \$20-\$45, free for kids ages 12 and under.

*Photo by Chicago Scots*



## **Bulls Fest at United Center**

**AUG. 23-24, 2025 | CHICAGO**

The two-day festival will feature a 3v3 basketball tournament, live music, art exhibitions, kid-friendly activities and food and drinks.

*Photo by Chicago Bulls*



## **Lincolnshire Art Festival**

**JULY 5-6, 2025 | LINCOLNSHIRE**

Featuring 80+ juried artists from around the world, this festival also offers live music, craft beer, food, and a kids art zone for family fun.

## **Roscoe Village Burger Fest**

**JULY 18-20, 2025 | CHICAGO**

Vote for Chicago's Best Burger and enjoy music, arts/crafts and a "Kids' Zone" for children and families to enjoy.

## **Glencoe Festival of Art**

**JULY 19-20, 2025 | GLENCOE**

Juried artists from across the U.S. present work in painting, photography, ceramics, glass, jewelry, and wood—plus live music, food, and kids' activities.

## **Evanston Art & Big Fork Festival**

**AUG. 16-17, 2025 | EVANSTON**

Shop art from 150 juried artists from around the country and enjoy selfie stations, face painting, a kids art zone, live music, food trucks and more.

## **Port Clinton Art Festival**

**AUG. 23-24, 2025 | HIGHLAND PARK**

This annual festival offers fine art from more than 200 of the world's most celebrated artists. Also, face painting, food, drinks, a kids tent and more.

## **Naperville Last Fling**

**AUG. 29-SEPT. 1, 2025 | NAPERVILLE**

Celebrate the end of summer at this Labor Day festival featuring an entertainment stage, food vendors, business expo vendors, family activities, parade and carnival.



# Free Outdoor Family Flicks

BY KARI ZAFFARANO

Chicagoland summer nights shine with outdoor movies—from animated classics to family adventures. Pack a picnic and enjoy a film under the stars!

## Movies in the Park at Scoville Park OAK PARK

Grab a blanket and snacks. Watch *Moana 2* on June 13, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* on July 12, *Santa Claus the Movie* on July 25, Community Choice on Aug. 22 and *Wicked* on Sept. 19.

## Movies in the Park at Wilder Park ELMHURST

Grab a picnic blanket and hit the food trucks to watch *Wreck It Ralph* on June 13, *Moana 2* on July 11 and *Wicked* on Aug. 8. Movies begin at dusk.



## Movies at Gallagher Way CHICAGO

In June, see *Twisters*, *The Parent Trap* and *Inside Out 2*. In July, see *Wicked*, *Maverick* and *The Little Mermaid*. In August, see *Moana 2* and *Crazy Rich Asians*. In September, see *Space Jam* and *Remember the Titans*.

## Movies Under the Stars at Willow Stream Park BUFFALO GROVE

Bring blankets, chairs and snacks, or hit the concessions. See *Inside Out 2* on June 20, *Moana 2* on July 12 and *The Wild Robot* on Aug. 1. Rain dates will be rescheduled.