



**50 FREE EVENTS ANNOUNCED FOR THE 2018 WAWA WELCOME AMERICA FESTIVAL
THURSDAY, JUNE 28 – WEDNESDAY, JULY 4**

***Three Nights of Concerts at Independence Hall; Two Fireworks Shows – The Biggest in a Decade;
26th Annual Wawa Hoagie Day; 18 Free Museums and Attractions; Debut of NEW Festival Events, and
Prime Time July 4th Concert Starring Pitbull Televised Live on NBC10 starting at 7 p.m.***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, PHILADELPHIA, PA (MAY 21, 2018) – Welcome America, Inc. and the Honorable James F. Kenney, Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, today announced 50 free events that will create the **2018 Wawa Welcome America** seven-day festival taking place Thursday, June 28 through Wednesday, July 4. The *Wawa Welcome America* festival celebrates American history, education and Philadelphia. The 2018 festival will encompass free, all-ages, patriotic events in Center City, the Historic District, in Philadelphia’s diverse neighborhoods and Valley Forge. The festival concludes with 12 hours of non-stop commemorations and celebrations on July 4th. The theme of this year’s *Wawa Welcome America* is “Welcoming the World with Love.”

New this year:

- A first-time gospel performance and a new salute to Broadway will lead up to the traditional POPS on Independence concert for three consecutive nights of concerts presented by Aetna at Independence Hall in partnership with Independence National Historical Park.
- Every day one or more Philadelphia museums will be open to all for free or pay what you wish, courtesy of the 18 participating museums and attractions.
- The PA Convention Center Community Festival celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Convention Center with an accompanying Philly Scoop Ice Cream Festival at the Reading Terminal Market marking the 125th anniversary of the market.
- New Summer Love Launch Event presented by Wells Fargo at Dilworth Park (Center City District) and the City Hall Courtyard.
- Debut of the Orangetheory Freedom Fit Fest on the steps at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.
- 250 local performers showcased throughout the festival.
- 4th of July Picnic in the Park at Valley Forge National Historical Park with guided tours and BBQ.

The festival kicks off on Thursday, June 28 at noon at Independence Mall in Philadelphia’s Historic District with the annual **Wawa Hoagie Day** honoring U.S. troops and concludes on July 4 with the most patriotic events and a star-spangled parade right where it all began at Independence National Historical Park. It all leads up to the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert and Fireworks* starring **Pitbull** and **The Philly POPS® BIG Band** with special guest **Heather Headley** on the stage in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Philly POPS will be honored for their 40-year history in Philadelphia and their contributions to education in schools.

NBC10 AND TELEMUNDO62

NBC10 will broadcast the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert and Fireworks* live during prime time in its entirety from 7 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday, July 4. NBC10's coverage of the concert will be simulcast on Cozi TV and TCN, as well as in Spanish on TeleXitos from 7 to 10 p.m. The free concert will also be live streamed on NBCPhiladelphia.com and Telemundo62.com and can be viewed on any screen – TV, iPad or tablet, smartphone, etc. Comcast NBCUniversal is the presenting media partner of the festival providing exclusive service ranging from broadcast to communications.

A festival schedule and details of 50 FREE events can be found at WelcomeAmerica.com. Festival brochures can be found at Wawa stores in six states – PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA and FL. Downloadable festival guides are available at WelcomeAmerica.com and NBCPhiladelphia.com. Festival guides in Spanish can be found at both WelcomeAmerica.com and Telemundo62.com. *Wawa Welcome America* offers exclusive hotel packages and official perks at WelcomeAmerica.com through partners Sonesta Philadelphia and the Loews Philadelphia Hotel that include up front tickets for the *July 4th Concert and Fireworks* starring Pitbull. A comprehensive travel resource for planning a trip is VisitPhilly.com.

WAWA WELCOME AMERICA 2018 FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS:

NEW! Three Concerts at Independence Hall – Expanding on the success of The Philly POPS® performance in front of Independence Hall, for the first time *Wawa Welcome America* and Independence National Historical Park will present three consecutive nights of free concerts presented by Aetna at Independence Hall. Start time for each concert is 7 p.m.

- **Gospel on Independence**, supported by Wells Fargo and media partner *The Philadelphia Tribune*, will send a message of love through song with performances by more than 150 singers and praise dancers from throughout the tri-state area, including the dynamic singing preachers “The Four Tenors,” for a hand-clapping and foot stomping soulful good time. *Sunday, July 1*
- **Kimmel Center’s Broadway Philadelphia on Independence** will delight audiences with song selections from the 2018-2019 Broadway Philadelphia season featuring performances from some of Broadway’s hottest shows coming to Philadelphia including *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory*; *Dr. Seuss’ How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical*; *RENT*; *Anastasia*; *CATS*; and *Beautiful – The Carole King Musical*. Supported by media partner *The Philadelphia Gay News*. *Monday, July 2*
- **POPS on Independence** annual free concert. With Independence Hall as the dramatic backdrop, conductor Todd Ellison will lead the 65-piece Philly POPS orchestra in a patriotic, entertaining performance starring Grammy-Award Winner Heather Headley. The Philadelphia tradition draws more than 15,000 locals and visitors each year. Presented by Comcast NBCUniversal, this performance is part of the POPS *Salute Series*, an expanding portfolio of programs performed on American holidays, celebrating those who serve our country, its cities, and communities. *Tuesday, July 3*

NEW! Pennsylvania Convention Center Community Festival – Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Pennsylvania Convention Center with a community festival with live entertainment, tours of the Center’s \$1.5 million art collection, birthday cake and a screening of the movie *SING* on *Saturday, June 30 from 12 to 5 p.m.* On the same day, across the street, the Reading Terminal Market also celebrates its 125th anniversary with the Philly Scoop Ice Cream Festival *Saturday, June 30 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.*

Biggest Fireworks Shows in More Than a Decade – In 2017, *Conde Nast Traveler* named Philadelphia’s *Wawa Welcome America Fireworks* on their list of “The Best 4th of July Fireworks in the USA,” and this year’s displays will be even bigger and better. Two spectacular shows will dazzle audiences with new

special effects and love-themed soundtracks which will be broadcast on the iHeartMedia Philadelphia iHeart app.

- *Saturday, June 30 at 9:30 p.m.* on the Delaware River Waterfront. Best waterfront views include the official viewing areas at the Moshulu, the Battleship New Jersey, One Liberty Observation Deck and Sugarhouse Casino. Presented by NBCUniversal and Pyrotecnico with support by the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation.
- *Wednesday, July 4 at 9:30 p.m.* on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway following the concert by Pitbull. Presented by NBCUniversal and Pyrotecnico.

Wawa Hoagie Day – Kicking off the festival at the National Constitution Center at Independence Mall is the crowd-favorite Wawa Hoagie Day. The 26th annual Wawa Hoagie Day honors U.S. troops. Witness a 7-ton hoagie salute, enjoy free Wawa hoagies, a performance by the USO Show Troupe, and a hoagie building competition of enormous proportions between police and firefighters. In addition, the National Constitution Center is open for free courtesy of Wawa. *Thursday, June 28 from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.*

NEW! Summer Love Launch Event – Everyone’s invited to City Hall for the first party of the *Wawa Welcome America* festival at Dilworth Park (Center City District) and the City Hall Courtyard. Enjoy non-stop entertainment on multiple stages celebrating Philadelphia artists and neighborhoods along with food and drink. Presented by Wells Fargo. *Thursday, June 28 from 3 to 8 p.m.*

Free Museum Days – Eighteen of Philadelphia’s museums and cultural institutions will open their doors free of charge (or an optional pay what you wish) during *Wawa Welcome America*...more museums than before! Courtesy of each museum and institution.

- National Constitution Center courtesy of Wawa *Thursday, June 28*
- Penn Museum and Eastern State Penitentiary *Friday, June 29*
- Independence National Historical Park First Bank of the U.S., Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department, The Rosenbach, Philadelphia History Museum and Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts *Saturday, June 30*
- One Liberty Observation Deck, The Barnes Foundation, Fort Mifflin, Philadelphia Museum of Art and African American Museum in Philadelphia *Sunday, July 1*
- The Mutter Museum and Philadelphia Museum of Art *Monday, July 2*
- Rodin Museum and The National Liberty Museum *Tuesday, July 3*
- National Museum of American Jewish History *Wednesday, July 4*

Philadelphia’s Historic District Block Party Celebrating The Bourse – Philly loves a block party and this year’s edition highlights the City of Brotherly Love’s signature music, art, entertainment, history, culture and food. A Kids’ Stage and Kids’ Zone for family-friendly entertainment, dozens of food trucks, pop-up performers and other activities make this an all-ages favorite. Behind-the-scenes tours of the renovated The Bourse Building and a lively beer garden for the over 21 set will celebrate the upcoming re-opening of one of the city’s beloved institutions which will feature a new food hall, artisans and other services. The event ends with the rousing POPS on Independence concert. *Tuesday, July 3 from 12 to 7 p.m.*

NEW! 4th of July Picnic in the Park at Valley Forge National Historical Park – Expanding *Wawa Welcome America* beyond Philadelphia for the first time, Valley Forge National Historical Park will host an all-American outdoor picnic and BBQ with live music. Kids can join the Continental Army, play interactive “Secrets & Spies” games, make arts and crafts and more. Live storytellers, demonstrations and tours of the park bring the history of Valley Forge to life. Presented by Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board. *Wednesday, July 4 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.*

Sand Sculpture Spectacular – International Sand Sculpting Champions John Gowdy and Matt Deibert will again create a Sand Sculpture Spectacular in the Rotunda at The Shops at Liberty Place. Using 40 tons of sand they will hand-carve iconic scenes, places and symbols that commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Created in partnership with The Parkway Council and sponsored by The Shops At Liberty Place. Construction begins Tuesday, June 12. Sculpture debuts Wednesday, June 20.

PECO GO 4th & Learn – *Wawa Welcome America* makes summer learning fun with Go 4th & Learn’s fun educational interactive activities and demonstrations highlighting American history, innovation, arts, and fitness and nutrition. Attendees will receive free books provided by Books in Homes USA.

- Penn Park at the University of Pennsylvania
- Fireman’s Hall Museum and Elfreth’s Alley
- Independence National Historical Park First Bank of the U.S.
- Uncle Bobby’s Coffee and Books

In addition, free book giveaways and citywide readings will be held at select branches of the Free Library of Philadelphia courtesy of Wells Fargo. Monday, July 2 at 12 p.m.

Philly @ The Movies presented by St. Christopher’s Hospital for Children and Hahnemann University Hospital – Enjoy free family-friendly movie nights with fun pre-movie entertainment, activities and giveaways. The series features Universal Pictures movies compliments of NBC10 and Telemundo62.

- *The Nutty Professor* – Dell East Music Center Thursday, June 28 at 7 p.m.
- *E.T.* – The Piazza at Schmidt’s Commons Friday, June 29 at 7 p.m.
- *SING* – Pennsylvania Convention Center Saturday, June 30 at 5 p.m.
- *Rocky* – Philadelphia Museum of Art steps Sunday, July 1 at 7 p.m.
- *Pitch Perfect* – Xfinity Live! Monday, July 2 at 5 p.m.

NEW! Orangetheory Freedom Fit Fest– Fitness enthusiasts of all levels are welcome to row, run or ride with free Orangetheory inspired activities at the steps at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Activities include scenic runs, bike rides, rowing challenges and pop-up classes followed by a free showing of *Rocky*. Guests can also enjoy an outdoor beer garden with bites from local food trucks throughout the day. Supported by the U.S. Army. Sunday, July 1 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Red, White & Blue Happy Hours – Guests over age 21 can indulge in tasty food, crafty cocktails and dynamic entertainment at the return of Red, White & Blue Happy Hours. Friday, June 29 and Monday, July 2 from 5 to 7 p.m.

- The Deck @ the Moshulu
- Sonesta Art Bar
- Sofitel Philadelphia Liberté Blue
- The Bourse
- The Piazza at Schmidt’s Commons
- Founding Farmers
- Cuba Libre
- Café Capriccio

PHL Airport Photo Exhibit – Calling all Eagles fans! A photo exhibition celebrating the Philadelphia Eagles 2018 World Championship victory with highlights of past championship teams and Eagles team Hall of Famers will debut at the Philadelphia International Airport. Tuesday, June 26 at 1 p.m.

On the Waterfront – Free family-friendly events along the Delaware River Waterfront all day and night.

Saturday, June 30

- A DEBUT EVENT! On the Delaware Music Festival at Pennypack on the Delaware 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. produced by RiverFront North with support by Councilman Bobby Henon. Visit MusicOnTheDelaware.com for the full lineup.
- Red, White & Brew Fest at SugarHouse Casino’s Fishtown Hops from 5 to 9 p.m.
- United States Army Band, “Pershing’s Own” Concert and Fireworks at Penn’s Landing presented by the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation. Concert at 8 p.m. followed by fireworks at 9:30 p.m.

BIG WEDNESDAY, JULY 4TH TO CONCLUDE THE FESTIVAL

Celebration of Freedom Ceremony – The City of Philadelphia’s Office of the City Representative and Independence National Historical Park will present the *Celebration of Freedom Ceremony* at Independence Hall where The Philly POPS will be honored for their 40-year history in Philadelphia and their contributions to education in schools. Mayor Kenney will present **The Magis Award**. And The Wawa Foundation will present **The Wawa Foundation Hero Award**, totaling \$80,000 to four non-profit organizations committed to serving the Greater Philadelphia area. Wednesday, July 4 at 10 a.m.

United States of America’s Independence Day Parade – Kicking off at Independence Hall immediately following the Celebration of Freedom Ceremony, 4,000 marchers, floats and celebrities will parade through Historic Philadelphia during the patriotic United States of America’s Independence Day Parade. Supported by Pep Boys. Wednesday, July 4 at 11 a.m.

All-Day Entertainment and Commemorative Events – Enjoy FREE entertainment on Independence Mall while exploring Philadelphia’s Historic District.

- Join Independence National Historical Park for the annual **Let Freedom Ring Ceremony** behind Independence Hall at 1 p.m. A ceremonial Bell Tapping Ceremony follows at the Liberty Bell Center at 1:45 p.m.
- **7th Annual Birthday Party at the Independence Visitor Center** hosted by Betsy Ross and Termini Bros. Bakery – A spectacular five-tier cake will be decorated, and 2,500 cupcakes displayed in the shape of an American flag at the Visitor Center throughout the morning starting at 9 a.m. Then join Betsy Ross in singing “Happy Birthday” at 1 p.m.
- Thirteen children will take the Oath of Citizenship during the **Children’s Naturalization Ceremony**, sponsored by the Flag House Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution at the Betsy Ross House at 1:30 p.m.

THE PARTY ON THE PARKWAY

Families can enjoy five blocks of free entertainment, food and fun including an interactive kid’s area featuring a zip-line, games, activities and more. The 21+ crowd can kick back and relax in two beer gardens featuring a wide selection of brews, ciders and Barefoot Wine, and all can enjoy interactive fitness activities with the U.S. Army, art from Philly Pop, and diverse food and music from the PA Lottery Philly Groove stage on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Wednesday, July 4 from 12 to 7 p.m.

LIVE NATION PHILADELPHIA PRODUCES THE JULY 4TH CONCERT ON THE PARKWAY

Grammy® winning global superstar, business entrepreneur and community icon **Pitbull** headlines the *Wawa Welcome America July 4th Concert* for the first time. The free, three-hour extravaganza also features **The Philly POPS® BIG Band** joined by Grammy Award Winning R&B, Gospel and Broadway Star **Heather Headley**, and R&B singers **Tiffany Jones, Alita Moses, and Desahanna Wooden**. Food trucks, beer gardens and fun activities round out a night of blockbuster fun on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Wednesday, July 4 at 7 p.m.

NEW! Martin's Law sponsors on-site hospitality to the union workers that will build and operate the temporary concert arena at Eakins Oval on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

SPONSORS MAKE IT ALL FREE!

2018 sponsors/partners of the festival include The City of Philadelphia, Wawa, Comcast NBCUniversal, Live Nation Philadelphia, Philadelphia International Airport, Visit Philadelphia, Wells Fargo, Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board, PECO, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Orangetheory Fitness, Martin Law, St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, Hahnemann University Hospital, Aetna, Pyrotecnico, Books In Homes USA, SugarHouse Casino, Tastykake, The Shops at Liberty Place, Barefoot Wine, The Philly POPS, Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, The Bourse, Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, Sonesta Philadelphia, Lowes Philadelphia Hotel, Philadelphia World Heritage City, Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia Magazine, Cozen O'Connor, Pennsylvania Lottery, PA Preferred, 500 Walnut, Broadway Philadelphia, Independence Visitor Center Corporation, Center City District and iHeartMedia Philadelphia. Sponsorship opportunities are still available, email information@welcomeamerica.com for more details.

Visit WelcomeAmerica.com to learn more, and join the conversation at:

- Facebook – Facebook.com/WawaWelcomeAmerica
- Twitter – Twitter.com/July4thPhilly
- Instagram – Instagram.com/July4thPhilly

About Welcome America, Inc.

Welcome America, Inc. is a 501c3, non-profit organization in public-private partnership with the City of Philadelphia. Welcome America, Inc.'s mission is to promote American history, education and Philadelphia. The organization seeks to enhance the resident and visitor experience through citywide events that provide an economic boost to the local economy. Moving forward, Welcome America, Inc. may produce and assist in the growth of select city events year-round.

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