



**MORE THAN 50 FREE, FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS ANNOUNCED FOR THE  
2019 WAWA WELCOME AMERICA FESTIVAL  
SATURDAY, JUNE 29 – THURSDAY, JULY 4**

***Free Entertainment Across the City; Three Fireworks Shows; Annual Wawa Hoagie Day; 20+ Free Museums and Attractions; 4,000+ Person Parade; Prime Time July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert Starring Jennifer Hudson, alongside The Philly POPS® BIG Band, and Meghan Trainor***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Philadelphia, Pa. (May 16, 2019)** – Welcome America, Inc. and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney today announced more than 50 free events that will create the six-day Wawa Welcome America festival. Taking place from Saturday, June 29 through Thursday, July 4, the 2019 festival will encompass free, multicultural and multigenerational, patriotic events throughout Philadelphia’s diverse neighborhoods. Wawa Welcome America celebrates Independence Day in one of the nation’s most historic cities, bringing residents and visitors a variety of fun-filled and educational events.

The multi-day festival includes a robust lineup of concerts, fireworks shows, family movie nights, museum days, educational activities, continuous recognition of our nation’s heroes and much more. The Fourth of July commemorations and celebrations will conclude with *Wawa Welcome America July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert and Fireworks* starring two-time GRAMMY® Award-winning recording artist, Academy Award-winning actress and best-selling author, Jennifer Hudson, performing alongside The Philly POPS® BIG Band and GRAMMY® Award-winner Meghan Trainor, leading up to one of the city’s largest fireworks displays over the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**WAWA WELCOME AMERICA 2019 FESTIVAL EVENTS:**

**Philadelphia’s Historic District Block Party**—A Philadelphia favorite, the day-long block party is a lively event full of music, art, entertainment, history, culture and food. Celebrate with free fun and games for all ages at the Kids Zone, enjoy dozens of food trucks, pop-up performers and other activities that make this a festival favorite. *Sunday, June 30 from noon—7 p.m.*

**Free Museum Days** – Twenty-two of Philadelphia’s museums, cultural institutions, and attractions will open their doors free of charge, or, for an optional pay-what-you-wish donation, during the Wawa Welcome America festival. Courtesy of each museum and institution, attendees can access the largest number of museums in the festival’s 27-year history. *Hours of complimentary entry vary per museum.*

**Saturday, June 29:** Christ Church and Free Library of Philadelphia Rare Book Department

**Sunday, June 30:** Rodin Museum, American Swedish Historical Museum, One Liberty Observation Deck, The Rosenbach Museum, Fort Mifflin—Freedom Blast!, and Circus Midway at FringeArts

**Monday, July 1:** Independence Seaport Museum, Museum of the American Revolution, and Photo POP Philly: Sweet Paradise at The Bourse

**Tuesday, July 2:** The National Constitution Center (free admission courtesy of Wawa, Inc.) and the African American Museum in Philadelphia

**Wednesday, July 3:** National Liberty Museum, The Galleries at Moore College of Art and Design, Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site, Penn Museum, Mütter Museum, Fireman’s Hall Museum, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and Photo POP Philly: Sweet Paradise at The Bourse

**Thursday, July 4:** Bartram’s Garden House and the National Museum of American Jewish History

**CHASE Presents: Philly @ the Movies Powered by NRG**— This movie-night series brings Philadelphia’s neighborhoods blockbuster films outdoors for residents to enjoy. New this year, all four movie nights will feature the films on stunning LED jumbo screens. Pre-movie activities featuring trivia, giveaways and entertainment begins at 5:30 p.m. Screenings will start at an earlier time of 7 p.m. to create a more family-friendly experience. While supplies last, CHASE will provide complimentary blankets to movie-goers, but everyone is encouraged to bring chairs or picnic spreads for all movies except for Franklin Field where guests will enjoy the film from the bleacher stands; complimentary popcorn will be provided courtesy of CHASE. Philly @ the Movies series is produced in partnership with the Philadelphia Film Society. Universal Pictures films compliments of NBC10 and Telemundo62.

**Sunday, June 30:** *Rocky*, Steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

**Monday, July 1:** *Invincible*, Franklin Field at the University of Pennsylvania

**Tuesday, July 2:** *Shrek*, FDR Park, attendees are encouraged to take SEPTA Broad Street Line to the NRG Station (Pattison Ave)

**Wednesday, July 3:** *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, Mander Playground

Plus, a special, ticketed screening of *Once in a Hundred Years: The Life & Legacy of Marian Anderson*, winner of Best Documentary Feature at the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival. Presented at the Philadelphia Film Center, the feature recounts the inspiring story of a Philadelphia musical icon who helped set the stage for the Civil Rights era. *Wednesday, July 3 at 2 p.m.*

**PECO Go 4<sup>th</sup> & Learn**—A dynamic event series presented by PECO will promote children’s reading and education through engaging activities, fun workshops and free books for all attendees supported by Books in Homes USA. Go 4<sup>th</sup> & Learn will launch Wawa Welcome America’s Inaugural Day of Service to promote community service and volunteerism with a day dedicated to cleaning Hunting Park.

**Sunday, June 30:** Independence Mall; Kids Zone at the Philadelphia’s Historic District Block Party. *From noon – 7 p.m.*

**Monday, July 1:** Penn Park at the University of Pennsylvania in partnership with Penn Athletics; Games, pop-up classes and performances promoting healthy living, fitness, culture and the arts. *From 10 a.m.—1 p.m.*

**Tuesday, July 2:** Hunting Park; Inaugural Day of Service park clean up. Hosted by Esperanza Academy. *From 2—5 p.m.*

**Wednesday, July 3:** Official unveiling of the design for a new mural celebrating the Philadelphia Fire Department —one of the oldest professional fire departments in the nation. This Mural Arts Philadelphia mural is sponsored by Wawa and the Philadelphia Fire Department. The event will

also include fire and electrical safety tips and demonstrations, games and giveaways. *From 10 a.m.—noon*

**Thursday, July 4:** Aviator Park; Performances by local groups on the Multicultural Stage, acrobatic dunkers, face painting, arts & crafts and games. *From noon—7 p.m.*

**Live Nation KidNation**—Live Nation invites kids to the Fillmore Philadelphia for a fun day of games and activities, giving the youth a peek inside the music industry alongside industry professionals plus fun giveaways, including tickets to upcoming shows, swag and more! *Tuesday, July 2 from noon—6 p.m.*

**Wawa Hoagie Day**—Title sponsor Wawa, Inc. presents an eight-ton hoagie Salute to Our Troops—named after the continuing focus of Hoagie Day— honoring our service members and hometown heroes, as well as recognizing Wawa’s long-standing partnership with the USO. Hoagie Day takes place at Independence Mall and the National Constitution Center Lawn, providing free hoagies and, for the first-time, a performance by the U.S. Army Field Band. Plus, “Hoagies for Heroes”, a hoagie-building competition between Philadelphia police and firefighters benefitting local charities. The day also features FREE admission to the National Constitution Center in honor of Wawa Hoagie Day. *Tuesday, July 2 at noon.*

## CONCERTS & FIREWORKS SHOWS

Wawa Welcome America will present numerous free concerts throughout the week at the Great Plaza at Penn’s Landing, Commonwealth Plaza at the Kimmel Center, Independence Hall and the Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

**United State Army Band “Pershing’s Own” Concert; Penn’s Landing**— The U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own” return to the Great Plaza at Penn’s Landing kicking-off the week is a patriotic concert. The performance concludes with a spectacular waterfront fireworks display over the Delaware River Waterfront. Wawa Welcome America Waterfront Fireworks are presented by Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, Comcast NBCUniversal and Pyrotecnico. *Saturday, June 29 at 8 p.m.*

**Gospel on Independence; Independence Hall**—This soulful performance, featuring a choir of more than 100 talented singers from across the city, the Philadelphia Men’s Fellowship Choir and the debut of Sisterly Love, will delight and inspire guests of all ages. *Sunday, June 30 at 7 p.m.*

**The United States Army Field Band; Penn’s Landing**—Celebrate our nation’s freedom at the Great Plaza at Penn’s Landing with a moving concert by the U.S. Army Field Band and a riveting performance of “Let Freedom Ring”, the band’s musical salute to the birth of our nation. Kicking off the show, The Golden Knights, The U.S. Army’s official aerial parachute team, will jump before the band takes the stage! Don’t miss the stunning waterfront fireworks display choreographed to a rousing soundtrack featuring some of America’s great orators. Wawa Welcome America Waterfront Fireworks are presented by Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, Comcast NBCUniversal and Pyrotecnico and will conclude the performance. *Monday, July 1 at 8 p.m.*

**Kimmel Center’s Great American Party on the Plaza; Kimmel Center**— Enjoy free performances on the Kimmel Center Plaza direct from the 2019/20 season. The event will feature festival-style activities and live performances from casts direct from Broadway and the U.S. Navy Band Cruisers all under the signature glass ceiling. Get your vocals ready and join in the Hamilton’s Hamiltunes Sing-a-long! *Wednesday, July 2 from 5—7:30 p.m.*

**POPS on Independence**—The beloved annual concert returns to Independence Hall with conductor Todd Ellison leading the 65-piece Philly POPS orchestra in a patriotic, entertaining performance with Tony-nominated actress and singer Susan Egan, best known for her role as the original ‘Belle’ in Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* on Broadway and the voice of ‘Meg’ in Disney’s *Hercules*, among many other Broadway, television and film performances. The Philadelphia tradition draws thousands of Philadelphians and visitors each year. Presented by Comcast NBCUniversal, this performance is part of the POPS *Salute Series*, a portfolio of programs performed on American holidays, celebrating those who serve our country, its cities, and communities. *Wednesday, July 3 at 7 p.m.*

## **JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CELEBRATION**

**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. This patriotic event includes a reading of The Declaration of Independence, where it was signed, and a rousing performance by the Philly POPS® BIG Band.

During the ceremony, Mayor Jim Kenney will present the fourth annual **Magis Award** to an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the award in their everyday life. Also recognizing a commitment to serving the Greater Philadelphia area, Wawa will announce the recipient of **The Wawa Foundation Hero Award**. Of four finalists—After School Activities Partnerships, Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence, Esperanza, and Pennsylvania Center for Adapted Sports—the winner will be chosen by public vote and receive a \$50,000 grant, while the three runners-up will each receive \$10,000 grants. *Begins at 10 a.m.*

**Salute to America Independence Day Parade** – Starting at Independence Hall immediately following the *Celebration of Freedom Ceremony*, 4,000 marchers, floats, and military personnel will process through the nation’s most historic square mile, presented by the Philadelphia International Airport. *Begins at 11 a.m.*

Other patriotic events throughout the day include the annual Let Freedom Ring Ceremony at Independence Hall, a ceremonial Liberty Bell Tapping, the 7<sup>th</sup> annual Birthday Party at the Independence Visitor Center followed by the Children’s Naturalization Ceremony at the Betsy Ross House.

## **THE PARTY ON THE PARKWAY**

Families can enjoy five blocks of free entertainment, food and fun including an interactive Kids’ Zone featuring a zip-line, acrobatic dunkers, bungee jumping, games and delicious complimentary treats from Tastykake and Popsicle. The 21+ crowd can take advantage of multiple beer gardens serving a variety of drink options, as well as interactive activities, all on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. *Noon—7 p.m.*

**Chill Moody Music Stage**—Returns to the Ben Franklin Parkway for the official Wawa Welcome America July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert Pre-Show. The set, curated by Philadelphia Music Ambassador and Recording Artist Chill Moody, will spotlight Philly's rising stars and invite artists from outside the region as well for a diverse and energetic experience. *Noon—7 p.m.*

### **THE JULY 4<sup>TH</sup> CONCERT PRODUCED BY LIVE NATION PHILADELPHIA AND COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL**

This year's star-studded performances feature GRAMMY® Award-winning icons Meghan Trainor and Jennifer Hudson, taking the Independence Blue Cross Stage at the Wawa Welcome America July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert for the first time. The free extravaganza will begin with singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist Meghan Trainor and conclude with a special set by Jennifer Hudson alongside The Philly POPS® BIG Band. Food trucks, beer gardens and fun activities round out a night of blockbuster fun on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The concert will conclude with an unforgettable fireworks display, presented by Comcast NBCUniversal and Pyrotecnico with a showstopping finale choreographed to a custom patriotic soundtrack arranged and performed by the U.S. Army Field Band, airing on 106.1 The Breeze, an iHeartMedia station. *Concert begins at 7 p.m., Fireworks at 9:30 p.m.*

The festival schedule and details of all events can be found at [WelcomeAmerica.com](http://WelcomeAmerica.com) and in Wawa stores in six states – PA, NJ, DE, MD, VA, and FL. Downloadable festival guides are available at [WelcomeAmerica.com](http://WelcomeAmerica.com) and [NBCPhiladelphia.com](http://NBCPhiladelphia.com). Festival guides in Spanish can be found at both [WelcomeAmerica.com](http://WelcomeAmerica.com) and [Telemundo62.com](http://Telemundo62.com). Wawa Welcome America offers exclusive hotel packages and festival tips at [WelcomeAmerica.com](http://WelcomeAmerica.com) in partnership with VISIT PHILADELPHIA through partners Sonesta Philadelphia, Loews Philadelphia Hotel and Kimpton Hotel Monaco Philadelphia that include tickets to the seated section for the July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert and Fireworks. A comprehensive travel resource for planning a trip is [VisitPhilly.com](http://VisitPhilly.com).

### **Broadcast and Streaming**

NBC10 and Telemundo62 will broadcast the Celebration of Freedom Ceremony and Salute to America Independence Day Parade the morning of July 4, at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., respectively.

NBC10 will broadcast the Wawa Welcome America July 4<sup>th</sup> Concert and Fireworks live during primetime in its entirety from 7 to 10 p.m. on Thursday, July 4. NBC10's coverage of the concert will be simulcast on Cozi TV and NBC Sports Philadelphia+, as well as in Spanish on TeleXitos from 7 to 10 p.m. The free concert will also be live streamed on [www.nbcphiladelphia.com](http://www.nbcphiladelphia.com) and [www.telemundo62.com](http://www.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.

### **SPONSORS MAKE IT ALL FREE!**

2019 sponsors/partners of the festival include The City of Philadelphia, title partner Wawa, Inc., Comcast

2019 top-tier sponsors/partners of the festival include The City of Philadelphia, title partner Wawa, Inc., Comcast NBCUniversal with NBC10/Telemundo62 as the local broadcast partners, Visit Philadelphia, Live Nation, CHASE and Independence Blue Cross.

Lead sponsors include, Philadelphia International Airport, PECO, NRG, the United States Army

Additional supporting sponsors/partners include, Tastykake, Martin Law, Pyrotecnico, Books In Homes USA, SugarHouse Casino, The Philly POPS, Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, Valley Forge Tourism and Convention Board, Inspire, Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, Sonesta Philadelphia, Loews Philadelphia Hotel, Kimpton Hotel Monaco Philadelphia, The Westin Philadelphia, Top Golf, Global Philadelphia, Independence National Historical Park, GEICO, Philadelphia Magazine, Penn Athletics, Cozen O'Connor, Pennsylvania Lottery, Independence Visitor Center Corporation, iHeartMedia Philadelphia, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Herr's, Cashman & Associates, Chatterblast, [2 one 5] Creative, T-Mobile, City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy. Sponsorship opportunities are still available, email [information@welcomeamerica.com](mailto:information@welcomeamerica.com) for more details.

### **About Welcome America, Inc.**

Welcome America, Inc. is a 501c3, non-profit organization engaged in a public-private partnership with the City of Philadelphia. Welcome America, Inc.'s goal is to promote American history, education, and the City of Philadelphia as global tourist destination. Each year, Welcome America, Inc. produces Wawa Welcome America, a multi-day festival featuring art, culture, community engagement and entertainment - it is the nation's premier Independence Day celebration! Welcome America was founded in 1993, and celebrates its 27<sup>th</sup> festival in 2019.

Visit [www.welcomeamerica.com](http://www.welcomeamerica.com) to learn more, and join the conversation at:

- Facebook – [www.facebook.com/WawaWelcomeAmerica](http://www.facebook.com/WawaWelcomeAmerica)
- Twitter – [www.twitter.com/July4thPhilly](http://www.twitter.com/July4thPhilly)
- Instagram – [www.instagram.com/July4thPhilly](http://www.instagram.com/July4thPhilly)

### **About Wawa, Inc.**

Wawa, Inc., a privately held company, began in 1803 as an iron foundry in New Jersey. Toward the end of the 19th Century, owner George Wood took an interest in dairy farming and the family began a small processing plant in Wawa, PA in 1902. The milk business was a huge success, due to its quality, cleanliness and "certified" process. As home delivery of milk declined in the early 1960s, Grahame Wood, George's grandson, opened the first Wawa Food Market in 1964 as an outlet for dairy products. Today, Wawa is your all day, every day stop for freshly prepared foods, beverages, coffee, fuel services and surcharge-free ATMs. A chain of more than 840 convenience retail stores (over 600 offering fuel), Wawa stores are located in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Florida and Washington, D.C. The stores offer a large fresh foodservice selection, including Wawa brands such as custom prepared hoagies, freshly-brewed coffee, hot breakfast sandwiches, specialty beverages and an assortment of soups, sides and snacks. In 2018, Wawa was recognized in Forbes as one of The Best Employers for New Grads and one of The Best Employers for Women, and as the Top Rated Workplace for Veterans by Indeed. In 2019, Wawa was designated by Forbes as a Best Employer for Diversity.

### **About Live Nation Entertainment**

Live Nation Entertainment is the world's leading live entertainment company comprised of global market leaders: Ticketmaster.com, Live Nation Concerts, Artist Nation Management and Live Nation Media/Sponsorship. For additional information, visit [www.livenation.com/investors](http://www.livenation.com/investors).

### **About NBC10 Philadelphia/WCAU**

Owned by NBCUniversal, NBC10 Philadelphia has been delivering local news, information and weather for more than 60 years, serving nearly six million viewers throughout Greater Philadelphia, the Lehigh Valley, South Jersey and Delaware. Viewers turn to NBC10 for the most up-to-date breaking news and

weather on a variety of platforms, including online at nbc10.com and via mobile and social platforms. COZI TV, the station's multicast network, offers a full schedule of America's most beloved and iconic television series and hit movies as well as local programming. COZI TV can be seen on Comcast channel 248, Verizon channel 460, RCN channel 28 and over-the-air on digital 10.2.

#### **About Telemundo62 Philadelphia/WWSI**

Owned by NBCUniversal, Telemundo62 / WWSI is NBC's Owned Television Stations local station serving Spanish-speaking viewers throughout the Greater Philadelphia area, including 18 counties across Pennsylvania, South Jersey and Delaware. Telemundo62 viewers start their mornings with Primera Edición, an hour-long, local Spanish-language newscast airing weekdays at 6 a.m. and continue to receive the latest in local news and weather information during Al Mediodía, a 30 minute newscast airing weekdays at noon. Noticiero Telemundo62 is a locally produced, live Spanish-language newscast, airing weekdays at 5 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. Viewers turn to Noticiero Telemundo62 for local news, weather, sports and community coverage on-air and on the Telemundo62 app. For more information, visit [Telemundo62.com](http://Telemundo62.com)

#### **About JPMorgan Chase**

JPMorgan Chase & Co. (NYSE: JPM) is a leading global financial services firm with assets of \$2.7 trillion and operations worldwide. The Firm is a leader in investment banking, financial services for consumers and small businesses, commercial banking, financial transaction processing, and asset management. A component of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, JPMorgan Chase & Co. serves millions of customers in the United States and many of the world's most prominent corporate, institutional and government clients under its J.P. Morgan and Chase brands. Information about JPMorgan Chase & Co. is available at [www.jpmorganchase.com](http://www.jpmorganchase.com).

#### **About Independence Blue Cross**

Independence Blue Cross is the leading health insurance organization in Southeastern Pennsylvania. With our affiliates, we serve nearly 8 million people nationwide. For more than 80 years, we have been enhancing the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve by delivering innovative and competitively priced health care products and services; pioneering new ways to reward doctors, hospitals, and other health care professionals for coordinated, quality care; and supporting programs and events that promote wellness. To learn more, visit [www.ibx.com](http://www.ibx.com). Connect with us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ibx](https://facebook.com/ibx) and on Twitter at [@IBX](https://twitter.com/IBX). Independence Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

#### **About Visit Philadelphia**

VISIT PHILADELPHIA® is our name and our mission. As the region's official tourism marketing agency, we build Greater Philadelphia's image, drive visitation and boost the economy.

On Greater Philadelphia's official visitor website and blog, [visitphilly.com](http://visitphilly.com) and [uwishunu.com](http://uwishunu.com), visitors can explore things to do, upcoming events, themed itineraries and hotel packages. Compelling photography and videos, interactive maps and detailed visitor information make the sites effective trip-planning tools. Along with Visit Philly social media channels, the online platforms communicate directly with

consumers. Travelers can also call and stop into the Independence Visitor Center for additional information and tickets.

### **About The Philly POPS®**

The Philly POPS®, the largest standalone pops orchestra in the United States, delights audiences with the inspired performance of American popular music. The POPS celebrates this distinctive musical heritage through an expanding repertoire of innovative concert performances and a robust set of educational and engagement initiatives.

Now celebrating its 40th Anniversary Season, the POPS, the official POPS orchestra of Pennsylvania and the City of Philadelphia's partner in civic celebration, serves a consistently growing audience of over 200,000 annually. Music Director Todd Ellison and the 65-piece Philly POPS orchestra keep listeners tapping their toes to an impressive repertoire of songs from American traditional music up through to today's chart-toppers.

The *Salute Series*, a series of free performances presented by Comcast NBCUniversal, includes *Memorial Salute at the Mann*, July 3 *POPS on Independence*, July 4 *Celebration of Freedom Ceremony* and July 4 *POPS on the Parkway* performance, Veterans Day mini-concerts, and the *I'll Be Home for Christmas: A Salute to the Military and First Responders* kick-off to the holiday POPS. These performances celebrate the American tradition of service around important national holidays. *POPS in Schools* enhances music education for Philadelphia School District students; *POPS Outside* brings POPS music to local communities. The Philly POPS performs as a founding resident company of The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, and at venues throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

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### **WAWA WELCOME AMERICA QUOTES:**

#### **Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney**

The Wawa Welcome America Festival continues to enhance Philadelphia's national reputation as a must-visit destination, with show-stopping, diverse and most importantly, entertainment experiences

that are open to the public. The City of Philadelphia is proud to welcome GRAMMY® Award-winning superstars Meghan Trainor and Jennifer Hudson to our great city, as well as shine a spotlight on Philadelphia-native, Patti LaBelle along with the hundreds of talented entertainers performing leading up to July 4.

**Welcome America, Inc. President & CEO Michael DelBene**

It is my honor as the newly appointed President & CEO of Welcome America, Inc. to invite all Philadelphia residents and visitors alike to 'Celebrate with Us' during our six-day 2019 Wawa Welcome America Festival. This year, we embrace time-honored traditions to celebrate the city's diverse neighborhoods, thriving creativity, and global appeal. With over 50 free, family-friendly events, we invite everyone to join the fun, and commemorate our nation's independence.