

WAWA WELCOME AMERICA ANNOUNCES NEW EVENTS, TALENT LINEUP AND MORE FOR PHILADELPHIA'S 250TH CELEBRATIONS – PLUS THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER TO HONOR HIS HOLINESS POPE LEO XIV

Queen Latifah, Idina Menzel, and others to join the 16-day festival, plus brand-new events, and more!

Philadelphia, PA (March 16, 2026) – [Welcome America, Inc.](#) today unveiled new headlining performers and an exciting slate of brand-new events and programming for the 2026 Wawa Welcome America festival – Philadelphia's premier 16-day celebration of freedom and independence from Juneteenth through July 4. With an expanded lineup and unforgettable experiences across the city, this year's festival is set to be the biggest yet as Philadelphia welcomes visitors and locals alike to commemorate America's 250th anniversary in the place where it all began.

Announcements at this morning's press conference included exciting **headlining talent additions** that will complement the lineup of both returning and new festival events, including:

- GRAMMY®, Emmy, Golden Globe, NAACP, SAG and Critic's Choice award-winning and Oscar-nominated musician, actress and producer **Queen Latifah** will headline with **The U.S. Army Field Band & Soldiers' Chorus** in front of Independence Hall on July 2.
- Multi-platinum-selling singer/songwriter and Tony Award-winning performer **Idina Menzel** will headline with **The Philly Pops** in front of Independence Hall on the eve of July 4th.
- GRAMMY® -Award winning singer, rapper, and actor, and native Philadelphian **Eve** will headline the **Celebration of Black Music Month** concert.
- 20-time GRAMMY® Award-winning artist, songwriter, producer, and music icon **Kirk Franklin** will headline the **Gospel on Independence** Concert in front of Independence Hall.
- GRAMMY® Award-Winning and Latin GRAMMY® Award-Winning Puerto Rican singer **Olga Tañón** will headline **Concilio's Annual Hispanic Fiesta** in Philadelphia's iconic LOVE Park.
- **DJ Jazzy Jeff** will headline The Annual Juneteenth Block Party at the African American Museum in Philadelphia as they celebrate 50 years this year.
- R&B Artist, songwriter, and producer from Philadelphia **Pink Sweat\$**, among other talented artists, will headline the NEW three-day event, **Philly Fair 250**.
- Drag performer, New York Times best-selling author, DJ and recording artist **Trixie Mattel** will host the **Philadelphia Orchestra Free Pride Concert and Celebration**.

NEW ADDITIONS TO WAWA WELCOME AMERICA 2026:

The **National Constitution Center** announced it will award the 38th annual Liberty Medal to **His Holiness Pope Leo XIV** at a public ceremony held on July 3, 2026, the eve of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, outside the Center on Independence Mall in Philadelphia. The award recognizes The Holy Father's lifelong work

promoting religious liberty and freedom of conscience and expression around the world, ideals enshrined by America's founders in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Pope Leo intends to deliver live acceptance remarks virtually from the Vatican, which will be livestreamed to those in attendance on Independence Mall.

This special Liberty Medal ceremony, held in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary and semiquincentennial, is presented in partnership with the City of Philadelphia and Wawa Welcome America as part of the city's Independence Week events celebrating the semiquincentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Villanova University also played a critical role in shaping this year's Liberty Medal program. Pope Leo will accept the Liberty Medal via live telecast, and viewers around the globe can watch the full ceremony live, thanks to Comcast NBCUniversal.

Also announced today is **Philly Fair 250**, a brand-new signature event joining the Wawa Welcome America lineup. Presented by Independence Blue Cross and produced in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, this once in a generation three-day celebration will activate the Centennial District from Saturday, June 20 through Monday, June 22, bringing history to life through a mix of culture, cuisine, music, and hands-on experiences.

Throughout the weekend, a spectacular **hot air balloon experience** will lift guests above the Centennial District for panoramic views of the Philadelphia skyline, the festival grounds, and the surrounding parkway. Back on the ground, visitors can swing into adventure on a trapeze with expert instructors, explore food trucks inspired by the flavors of the original 13 colonies, and enjoy performances from world renowned artists alongside Philadelphia's exceptional local talent. Saturday will feature **Gerald Veasey's *Unscripted Jazz*** performance, while Sunday is headlined by Philadelphia native **Pink Sweat\$**.

In honor of the nation's 250th anniversary, the National Liberty Museum will present a life sized replica of the Liberty Bell for visitors to experience up close. Interactive exhibits, workshops, and family friendly activities from the Centennial District's top cultural institutions invite exploration, celebrating the innovation, artistry, and history that define this community. Participating partners include the Please Touch Museum, the Science History Institute, the Philadelphia Zoo, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center, the Mann Center, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the National Liberty Museum, and more.

Festivities on Saturday and Sunday will culminate with nighttime fireworks presented in partnership with the Science History Institute. One evening will transport audiences back in time with a historically inspired exhibition featuring the dramatic pyrotechnic burning of a temporary architectural structure, a form of entertainment that captivated crowds for centuries. The second night will trace the evolution of the art form, building from early techniques into the large-scale fireworks displays audiences know today.

On Monday, the celebration continues with a Community Day presented by Jefferson, inviting families from across the city to enjoy an evening of activities, field games, and more as Philadelphia celebrates 250 years of the United States.

Wawa Welcome America announced another addition to the programming lineup this year – the **Philadelphia Orchestra Free Pride Concert and Celebration** on Tuesday, June 30. The concert will feature a performance by the world-renowned **Philadelphia Orchestra**, hosted by Drag performer, New York Times best-selling author, DJ and recording artist **Trixie Mattel**, best known for competing in the seventh season of RuPaul's Drag Race and the winner of season three of RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars.

Free Movie Days – The Philadelphia Film Society has partnered with Welcome America to present a two-week eclectic program of FREE screenings by and about Philly. From Old Hollywood stars and directors to Eagles diehards, this explosive display of cinematic fireworks kicks off the summer right. Movies include *Creed*, *Footloose*, *The Wiz*, *National Treasure*, *Mean Girls*, *Invincible*, *Independence Day*, and more!

Note: While these movies are free, PFS asks that tickets be reserved via their website www.filmadelphia.org

Philadelphia Film Society Center, 1412 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Plus, **Free Museum Days** are back! Full list of participating museums to be announced on july4thphilly.com and [@july4thphilly](https://twitter.com/july4thphilly).

5 Days of Giveaways: During the month of April, festival fans can get excited for the opportunity to win a \$250 gift card to their favorite restaurant, hotel, spa, and more. Each day of the campaign, five lucky fans will be selected as winners. Participating partners include Wawa, Mitchell & Ness, and Borgata Casino and Spa, with a full list of participating businesses to be announced on July4thPhilly.com.

FULL 2026 WAWA WELCOME AMERICA SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

The Annual Juneteenth Block Party at the African American Museum in Philadelphia is an unforgettable celebration of freedom and culture in partnership with Wawa Welcome America and VISIT PHILADELPHIA®. Celebrate 50 years of the African American Museum this year at this Juneteenth Jubilee and enjoy live musical performances – including a headlining performance by the legendary **DJ Jazzy Jeff** in addition to other headlining performers to be announced, plus shop Black-owned businesses, savor delicious local eateries, and experience fun for the whole family!

Friday, June 19, 12:00pm – 5:00pm, African American Museum in Philadelphia, 7th & Arch Street

Philly Fair 250 – Presented by Independence Blue Cross and produced in partnership with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, this once in a generation three-day celebration will activate the Centennial District from Saturday, June 20 through Monday, June 22, bringing history to life through a mix of culture, cuisine, music, and hands-on experiences.

Throughout the weekend, a spectacular **hot air balloon experience** will lift guests above the Centennial District for panoramic views of the Philadelphia skyline, the festival grounds, and the surrounding parkway. Back on the ground, visitors can swing into adventure on a trapeze with expert instructors, explore food trucks inspired by the flavors of the original 13 colonies, and enjoy performances from world renowned artists alongside Philadelphia's exceptional local talent. Saturday will feature **Gerald Veasey's *Unscripted Jazz*** performance, while Sunday is headlined by Philadelphia native **Pink Sweat\$**.

Saturday, June 20 – Monday June 22, 2-9PM Saturday/Sunday, 2-8PM Monday – Avenue of The Republic & West Memorial Hall Drive

The Five Points Night Market – Experience the energy of the Five Points Night Market, a vibrant celebration bringing food, music, and community pride to Rising Sun Avenue. Enjoy delicious eats from food trucks, shop local vendors, and take in live performances, summer fun, and activities for all ages—all in one lively neighborhood gathering you won't want to miss.

Wednesday, June 24, 5:00pm-9:00pm Cottman & Rising Sun Avenue

Celebration of Black Music Month + Fireworks – Celebrate Black Music Month, founded in Philadelphia, during a special evening showcasing powerful performances honoring the excellence of women in Black music. This free event will feature a headlining performance by **GRAMMY Award Winning rapper, singer and actress, and native Philadelphian, Eve**. The evening will conclude with a dazzling fireworks finale at the iconic Dell Music Center.

Guests are encouraged to get tickets in advance at the Dell Box Office. Admission and seating will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis.

Thursday, June 25, 5:30pm - Gates Open, 7:00pm – Concert, The Dell Music Center, 2400 Strawberry Mansion Drive, Philadelphia, PA, 19132

Kidchella Music Festival + Fireworks – Dance, play, create! Kids of all ages can enjoy this free music festival featuring dynamic performances on the Kidchella Music Stage supported by PECO, art stations, mouthwatering treats, exciting giveaways, and more! This vibrant celebration will take place on Smith's spacious front lawn, promising a comfortable and scenic experience. It's not just a concert; it's a community celebration. The evening will conclude with a kid-tastic fireworks display!

Friday, June 26, 4:00pm-9:00pm, Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse, 3500 Reservoir Drive

Concilio's Annual Hispanic Fiesta – Celebrate culture, community, and tradition at Concilio's Annual Hispanic Fiesta at LOVE Park. Experience a high-energy festival filled with live music, including a headlining performance by Grammy Award-Winning and Latin Grammy Award-Winning Puerto Rican singer, **Olga Tañón**, along with dynamic dance

performances, top food trucks, and family-friendly attractions that showcase the rich diversity and vibrant spirit of Philadelphia's Hispanic community — all in the heart of the city.

Saturday, June 27, 2:00pm - 9:00pm, LOVE Park, 16th Street & JFK Boulevard

Patriotic Concert & Spectacular Waterfront Fireworks – Celebrate summer with a high-energy patriotic concert, followed by a thrilling fireworks display over the Delaware River Waterfront. **Performer to be announced.**

Saturday, June 27, 8:00pm - 10:00pm, Independence Blue Cross RiverRink

Gospel on Independence will return for yet another moving and soul-stirring performance with Independence Hall in the background. This powerful celebration of gospel music will bring together an incredible lineup of local artists, choirs, and musicians for a night of uplifting performances, plus, a headlining performance by 20-time GRAMMY® Award-winning artist, songwriter, producer, and music icon **Kirk Franklin**.

Sunday, June 28, 7:00pm - 9:00pm, Independence National Historical Park at 6th & Market Streets on the Independence Concert Series Stage presented by VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Philadelphia Orchestra Free Pride Concert and Celebration – Now in its fifth year, The **Philadelphia Orchestra's** free Pride Concert returns in partnership with Wawa Welcome America as part of Philadelphia's America 250 celebration. The Orchestra, led by guest conductor Carolyn Kuan, performs music by LGBTQ+ composers and allies in a fabulous celebration of unity, empowerment, and the Philadelphia region's LGBTQ+ community.

The concert spotlights ANNA Crusis Feminist Choir, the Philadelphia Gay Men's Chorus, Philadelphia Voices of Pride, and the Transcendent Choir of Philadelphia, and is hosted by drag performer, author, and recording artist **Trixie Mattel**, best known for winning season three of RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars.

Arrive early for fun entertainment in the Kimmel Center's Commonwealth Plaza featuring local Philly LGBTQ+ organizations, giveaways, a drag performance showcase, and a rainbow runway.

Tuesday, June 30, 7:00pm, Kimmel Center, 300 S Broad St, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Wawa Hoagie Day® — Join Wawa for historic Hoagie Day, honoring local heroes, building and serving Wawa Shorti Hoagies, and a performance by Voices of Service. Hoagies will be served FREE at Noon, on Arch Street between 5th & 6th, followed by a free concert from the **U.S. Airforce Heritage of America Band** on Independence Mall. Guests can also enjoy free admission all day to the National Constitution Center courtesy of Wawa.

Wednesday, July 1, 12:00pm, Arch Street between 5th & 6th Streets at Independence Mall

Red, White, & Blue To-Do – The Philadelphia Historic District 250th Committee presents the 2026 Red, White, & Blue To-Do celebration to take place on July 2, commemorating a day of “pomp and parade,” as declared by John Adams in 1776, encouraging visitors to celebrate independence in the place where it all began. A vibrant display of patriotic celebration, Red, White, & Blue To-Do brings together museums and historic sites in America’s most historic square mile to honor the nation’s founding. The day begins with bell ringings, museum and historic site openings, and a flag-raising ceremony with Betsy Ross, followed by the **Red, White, & Blue To-Do Pomp & Parade** featuring whimsical red wagon floats, drill teams, and cultural dance troupes. As the parade concludes, free fun ensues with an **All-American Block Party presented by Bank of America** full of music, games, food, and family-friendly activities, plus highlights from Historic District attractions. The afternoon features a culturally diverse lineup of free street musical performances at **Red, White, & Blue To-Do Independence Folk Festival** at locations throughout the Historic District. The elaborate floats that will star in The Salute to Independence Semiquincentennial Parade will be on display during **Float Fest** for guests to snap their photos with. The evening concludes with Wawa Welcome America’s Salute to Service featuring The United States Army Field Band and Soldiers’ Chorus on Independence Mall.

Thursday, July 2, 9:00am - 9:00pm, Historic District, various locations

Salute to Service: The United States Army Field Band & Soldiers’ Chorus with Headliner Queen Latifah – The U.S. Army Field Band & Soldiers’ Chorus return to Independence Mall with a rousing performance honoring our Soldiers and Veterans, while showcasing the talented musicians and artists in the Army. Featuring a headlining performance by Grammy, Emmy, Golden Globe, NAACP, SAG and Critic’s Choice award-winning and Oscar-nominated musician, actress, producer, label president, author, and entrepreneur **Queen Latifah**. The concert will also feature a special performance by **Miss America 2026, Cassie Donegan**.

The evening will begin with a special award ceremony in honor of the nation's 250th anniversary. The Wawa Foundation will present **The Wawa Foundation Salute to Service Award** to a USO Center and a USO volunteer who support active-duty service members and their families. Over \$100,000 in USO program donations will be announced, with the Salute to Service medal awarded to the volunteer.

This event is presented by American Airlines, the official airline of the Wawa Welcome America Festival.

Thursday, July 2, 7:00pm - 9:00pm, Independence National Historical Park at 6th & Market Streets on the Independence Concert Series Stage presented by VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

JULY 3 IN PHILADELPHIA

The Salute to Independence Semiquincentennial Parade – Wawa Welcome America's Salute to Independence Semiquincentennial Parade is a favorite tradition of the festival every year and is returning in 2026 as the largest professionally produced Semiquincentennial celebration parade in the country. Taking place on July 3 at 11:00am, the parade will feature 250 elements representing all 50 states and U.S. territories, including all 52 Miss America state and territory titleholders representing their home state or territory with thematic elements. The parade will also include 50 marching bands, 13 floats, military elements, special units, and historical elements, as well as international groups from countries around the globe – all traveling through the very streets where the nation's independence was born 250 years ago.

The parade will debut an expanded route this year, beginning at 5th and Chestnut Streets and passing Independence Hall before continuing down Market Street, circling City Hall, traveling along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and around Logan Circle, and returning toward Market Street City Hall before concluding at Broad and Chestnut Streets.

Friday, July 3, 11:00am, Beginning at 5th and Chestnut Street

38th Annual Liberty Medal Ceremony – The **National Constitution Center** will award the 38th annual Liberty Medal to **His Holiness Pope Leo XIV** at a public ceremony held on July 3, 2026, the eve of the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, outside the Center on Independence Mall in Philadelphia. The award recognizes The Holy Father's lifelong work promoting religious liberty and freedom of conscience and expression around the world, ideals enshrined by America's founders in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Pope Leo intends to deliver live acceptance remarks virtually from the Vatican, which will be livestreamed to those in attendance on Independence Mall, as well as online via the Center's website.

This special Liberty Medal ceremony, held in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary and semiquincentennial, is presented in partnership with the City of Philadelphia and Wawa Welcome America as part of the city's Independence Week events celebrating the semiquincentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Villanova University also played a critical role in shaping this year's Liberty Medal program. Pope Leo intends to accept the Liberty Medal via live telecast. The ceremony will be streamed live to audiences gathered on Independence Mall, with Comcast NBCUniversal supporting the livestream on site. The National Constitution Center will also broadcast the ceremony through its own livestream platforms, reaching viewers across the nation and around the world.

Friday, July 3, time to be announced, Independence National Historical Park at 6th & Market Streets

Pops on Independence with Headliner Idina Menzel – Celebrate the 250th anniversary of America with the Philly Pops at Independence Mall featuring a headlining performance

by multi-platinum-selling singer/songwriter and Tony Award-winning performer **Idina Menzel**. Enjoy a patriotic evening of live orchestral music, favorite tunes, and festive cheer in the heart of Philadelphia's historic district, presented by Bank of America.

Friday, July 3, 7:00pm - 9:00pm, Independence National Historic Park at 6th & Market Streets on the Independence Concert Series Stage presented by VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

JULY 4TH IN PHILADELPHIA

July Fourth in Philadelphia will once again begin with the **Celebration of Freedom Ceremony** outside of Independence Hall at 10:00am, honoring America's 250th anniversary in the very place where it all happened. This ceremony will include moving speeches, powerful performances, and impactful awards.

The Wawa Foundation Hero Award will be presented again on July 4th. Since 2015 as part of this Festival, Wawa has been offering Philadelphia non-profits the opportunity to nominate their organization for grants to build stronger communities. One non-profit will receive a \$50,000 grant, and three non-profits will each receive \$10,000. The community will be invited to vote to determine the Hero Award top grant winner.

Be part of this historic milestone in Philadelphia's iconic historic district!

Saturday, July 4, 10:00 a.m., Independence National Historic Park

Event times and locations are subject to change.

BROADCAST & STREAMING:

As the official media partner of Wawa Welcome America, NBC10 will provide comprehensive coverage of the festival across all its platforms. The station will deliver reporting on celebrations from Juneteenth through July 4th, highlighting key moments and local stories throughout the festival. Coverage will include features on participating artists and streaming of select events, such as the Salute to Independence Parade on July 3rd. NBC10 will also serve as the exclusive broadcast home for the July 4th Concert and Fireworks. As the only way to watch the concert and fireworks for free, NBC10 offers audiences the opportunity to experience the culminating celebration from the comfort of their homes.

Translations by Language Services Associates:

Thanks to Language Services Associates, Wawa Welcome America's official Interpretation & Translation partner, the festival schedule will be available in May on july4thphilly.com in the following languages: Spanish, French, and Chinese.

Thank you to our sponsors:

The annual Wawa Welcome America festival is produced in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, and made possible by the support from generous sponsors, including title partner Wawa, Comcast NBCUniversal and their local broadcast stations NBC10, Telemundo62, NBC Sports Philadelphia, Independence Blue Cross, Bank of America, American Airlines, Jefferson, VISIT PHILADELPHIA®, and Live Nation. Festival events and programming also made possible by The African American Museum in Philadelphia, PECO, Ensemble Arts Philly, iHeartMedia Philadelphia, Philly Pops, Rita's Italian Ice, Herr's Food Inc., Chaddsford Winery, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Pennsylvania Lottery, East Market, Language Services Associates, Tullamore Dew, Sesame Place, Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa, Mitchell & Ness, Independence National Historical Park, Global Philadelphia, Historic Philadelphia, Independence Visitor Center Corporation, Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse, PhillyGoes2College, The Dell Music Center, Pyrotechnico, Visual Infinity, Delaware River Waterfront Corporation, The W and Element Hotel Philadelphia, Zoe Grey, Influence Entertainment, Under the Sun Productions, MTM Productions, Empress Luxury Events, D.E.B.S LLC, Innovative Catering Concepts, A Choir'd Taste, LLC, HiTouch, Roberts Event Group, Cashman & Associates, Chatterblast Media, AgileCat and Zeit House.

QUOTES:

“For 35 years, Wawa Welcome America has brought people together in Philadelphia to celebrate the ideals of freedom, liberty and independence that define our nation,” said Michael Delbene, President and CEO of Welcome America, Inc. “As we prepare for an extraordinary year marking America’s 250th anniversary, we are proud to once again deliver the nation’s largest July 4th celebration – one that stretches 16 days from Juneteenth through July 4th and reflects the voices, stories and experiences of all Philadelphians, and all Americans. No matter where you come from or how your story fits into our nation’s history, Wawa Welcome America is a place where everyone can come together to commemorate, celebrate and build community in the birthplace of our democracy.” – Michael DelBene, President & CEO, Welcome America, Inc.

“Philadelphia is the birthplace of American democracy, and our city has always known how to celebrate the ideals born here. Welcome America brings residents and visitors together through music, culture, and the unmistakable spirit of Philadelphia. As we prepare to welcome the nation and the world for America’s 250th birthday, we’re excited for everyone to experience the pride and energy that make our city so special.” – Mayor Cherelle L. Parker, City of Philadelphia

“From all of us at Wawa, we are thrilled to be back once again for another Wawa Welcome America. As a title sponsor since 2010 and having been involved in the festival since it’s beginning, we have always said there are two main reasons we love this festival – we truly believe there is nowhere better to be on the Fourth of July than right here in Philadelphia, and we are committed to making this a free festival for all. That’s what has always set Wawa Welcome America apart, and that is what’s more important than ever

*with the monumental year that is upon us as we commemorate America's 250th anniversary.” – **Brian Schaller, President, Wawa, Inc.***

*“For nearly four decades, the Liberty Medal has honored individuals whose leadership has advanced freedom and human dignity around the world. Pope Leo XIV joins that tradition because throughout his life and ministry—as a priest, bishop, cardinal, and now Pope—he has been a steadfast voice for religious liberty, freedom of conscience, and dialogue among faith traditions.” – **Vince Stango, Interim President & CEO, National Constitution Center***

*“We are deeply invested in the communities we serve, which is why we're proud to support Wawa Welcome America and mark ten years as the festival's broadcast partner. The festival brings Philadelphia together and showcases the very best of our city. We're excited to share Philadelphia's spirit with the world as we commemorate America's 250th anniversary.” – **Michelle Singer, Senior Vice President, Political Engagement, Comcast Corporation***