



Windham Weekly

A Section of the *Mountain Eagle*

Windham Ramps Up for Autumn Affair this Weekend

By Matthew Avitabile
Fri October 10, 2025

WINDHAM — Windham will celebrate its 31st Annual Autumn Affair this weekend, which promises to be its largest and best yet. The Saturday, Oct. 11 and Sun. Oct. 12 event will begin at 10am and run until 5pm each day in and around Main Street in Windham. The Windham Chamber of Commerce is leading the effort with crucial support from the Windham Foundation, local government, businesses, and volunteers. This year, there will be more than 50 vendors lining Main Street in Windham. There will be ample live music, as well as an assortment of different foods. Saturday will feature country-pop recording artist Ryan Clark, while Soulsense will perform R&B favorites on Sunday. There will be a number of different booths and attractions, including animal exhibits from Wes Laraway, Hudson Valley Reptiles, the Vidbel Home-stead Petting Zoo, and more. There will be a Touch-a-Truck event by the Wind-ham Fire Department along with children's activities such as the Catskill Mountain Country Store's Spooky Hay maze. Also over the weekend will be the Methodist Church Apple Fest, the baking

competition in the Centre Church, the Coldwell Banker Village Green Doggie Beauty Photo Contest, sausage and peppers at the Main Street Market, and wine and spirit tastings at Windham Wine and Liquors, among much more. “The Autumn Affair has always been about celebrating the heart of Windham — our people, our local businesses, and the sense of community that makes this town so special. What began as a small gathering has grown into one of the Catskills’ most beloved fall traditions. We’re deeply grateful to our volunteers, vendors, and local partners whose dedication brings Main Street to life each year and makes this celebration of community spirit possible,” said Chamber President Lisa Jaeger. Paul Mutter of the Windham Foundation said that the Autumn Affair has been a major symbol of success for the community. “In a small town it should be commonplace for the townspeople to come together but it doesn’t happen very often. The Autumn Affair is one of those times that the people of the community come together, bump into each other on the sidewalk, and get to know each other.” This was his



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experience last year. It's also a "showcase for the community businesses," said Mutter. "It's a perfect match between economic development and community development," he said. The Foundation will have a table in front of Windham Fine Arts, where copies of the newspaper will be available free of charge. The group seeks feedback from the community regarding where the group should direct their future resources. "We actually need to hear what people would like us to focus on," he said. Mutter added that there is a "durability" of the more than 20 years of the Foundation. Furthermore, the Foundation works to step in alongside the work of local government and organizations. The Foundation works to supplement many of the efforts in the community. He cited the scholarships of the Foundation, including teachers at Windham-Ashland-Jewett who returned to the district to teach. The Foundation's mission statement is "To enhance and enrich our community by providing charitable grants for historical preservation, the arts, education, recreation, and initiatives deemed to make Windham an extraordinary place to live, work and visit." "We really want to create a community that's vibrant where kids come back," he said. Mutter credits the Foundation's work with local

government and the Chamber. The marriage of civic, business, and non-profit efforts have been able to foster the growth of local events, including the Autumn Affair. He said that the Windham Chamber has been a "leading indicator where there's opportunity." Mutter said that the Chamber has been a "vital communication of what's going on in town. "It's a very important gateway to the community for us." The Windham Foundation has been involved in a number of crucial projects in the community, including its critical role in the expansion of the Windham Path. The Foundation has also assisted in the acquisition of 34 acres in Hensonville, including seven for the new Little League fields. It has also been instrumental in a number of projects in and around CD Lane Park. "Today, as Windham experiences a renaissance, the Foundation continues to adapt. The Northern Catskills have seen tourism explode post-pandemic, with growth in visitor dollars and job creation that underscores our area's rising popularity as a four-season destination. As development in our town increases, so does our community's need for matching infrastructure and services. Sixty years ago, as towns like Vail and Aspen experienced their own phase of hyper-



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growth, non-profit foundations sprung up alongside for-profit businesses to balance and enhance the needs of locals, weekenders, and tourists. Today, Windham is on a similar trajectory as these now-storied towns and the opportunity presented by the Windham Foundation to its donors and volunteers is equally exciting,” said the Foundation. “At the heart of the Foundation's current work are initiatives that blend a respect for history with methodical approach to cultivating the future. Take the Windham Path, a 1.5-mile multi-use recreational loop that offers residents and visitors a safe, scenic route for walking, biking, and enjoying nature. The Foundation has been instrumental in plans for its extension, including the new 1.5-mile “Dent Loop” addition that as of this summer connects more of Windham’s hamlets and enhances recreational access. The project not only promotes outdoor activity but also safeguards Windham’s natural beauty, ensuring the town remains a haven,” said the Foundation. “Through every event we organize — from the Easter Egg Hunt and Maplefest to our 4th of July Celebration, Summer Concert Series, the signature Autumn Affair, and the beloved Christmas Tree Lighting and Parade of Lights — our goal is the same: to bring people together. Each of these

celebrations reflects the spirit of Windham — lifting each other up, fostering connection, and building a stronger, more vibrant community and a better life for everyone who calls this town home. Whether you live, visit, work, or play here, you immediately feel that sense of belonging and pride that makes Windham truly special,” said Jaeger. “Looking ahead, the Windham Foundation anticipates continuing to execute its mandate of supporting local community initiatives, while at the same time increasing fundraising and capital allocation toward larger-scale projects. One emerging area of need is a recreation-focused community center that would serve residents as a high-quality local hub for athletics as well as community events and gatherings. Other ideas include providing support for a new town hall and expanding residents’ options for after-school childcare. Though various concepts are still in their infancy, the Foundation expects to continue to rapidly evolve to meet Windham’s changing needs while honoring the town’s proud legacy,” said the Foundation.