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# Celebrate America offers fireworks, food and fun

## Local Independence Day festival boasts a night for everyone

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Written by  
Lindsay Marshall  
Contributing Writer

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Independence Day is usually spent with family, watching parades, setting off fireworks and having barbecues to celebrate the freedom of this great nation. This year, the holiday is on a weekday, and many 'Noles are away from home due to school and work schedules.

If you cannot be with family, what better way to spend the Fourth of July than by attending a traditional event in the state's capital?

Celebrate America, a Tallahassee Independence Day tradition, has been held at Tom Brown Park since 1985. The gathering is a popular way to commemorate the Fourth, not only among families in the area, but also among many FSU students spending their summer in Tallahassee.



Celebrate America has been a local Independence Day staple at Tom Brown Park since 1985. / Frank Dietrich/City of Tallahassee

"I went last year and plan on going this upcoming week again," FSU senior Tatianna Daguillard said. "It is a great event."

The festival includes a free concert, featuring local hip hop artist, Royce Lovett, rockers 4:35 On A Thursday and world-renowned blues rock band, The Fabulous Thunderbirds. Local food vendors will be present, including Dog Et Al, Fired Up Pizza, Marble Slab, Piggy's BBQ, Southern Concessions, Hoagle Express and Big Easy Snowballs, among many others. Kid-friendly activities include arts and crafts, bounce houses, slip and slides and pony rides.

The night closes with the "Sky Concert," a fireworks display sponsored by City of Tallahassee Your Own Utilities. The show is put on by East Coast Pyrotechnics, an entertainment company using the latest in

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The event draws between 8,000 to 10,000 people a year. / Frank Dietrich/City of Tallahassee

#### Event information:

Celebrate America begins at 5:30 p.m. and free shuttles will be provided between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. by StarMetro, leaving from the Koger Office Center on Capital Circle Southeast to and from the park every fifteen minutes. StarMetro would like to remind shuttle users not to bring coolers larger than twelve quarts.

Vehicular access to the park will be closed at 8:30 p.m.

The dog park at Tom Brown Park will be closed the entire day and pets are not allowed at the event.

Personal grills, fireworks, tents, and alcoholic beverages are also prohibited.

The disc golf course will stay open throughout the event, however, some holes may be off limits due to festival activities.

For more information, visit [celebrateamerica.com](#).

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pyrotechnics.

"Of course everyone came for the fireworks, but I got a lot more than I anticipated," said Daguillard. "Being surrounded by fellow Americans who are there to pay respects to their country and enjoy a day dedicated to patriotism was something that I have not felt in a long time. Old and young, everyone was there for one common purpose and it was beautiful."

Celebrate America started as a small affair, and throughout the years has grown into a major festival, drawing crowds from all over North Florida and South Georgia. Executive Director of Celebrate America, Jan Bubsey, has helped run the event for the past seven years.

"It is a large crowd," said Bubsey. "It is normally between 8,000 and 10,000 people minimum, but we have had more than that."

There will also be a naturalization ceremony for new American citizens. Thirteen petitioners will be sworn in as citizens.

Whether it is your first Independence Day in Tallahassee, or you haven't decided how to spend your day, a good time with family and friends will surely be had by all who attend Celebrate America.

"The fireworks were amazing [last year]," said Daguillard. They lasted a good amount of time, [and] I was in awe that in such a small town, Tallahassee could produce such a marvelous show."

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