

2026 Somers Independence Day Parade Report

The Somers Parade Committee, consisting of five residents of Somers - Ben Harbach, Judy Schantek, Al Ferber, Sandy Kotten and Stephanie Funk - began meeting in January to plan the 2026 Independence Day Parade events. We had our work cut out for us, since this is the 250th birthday of our nation several of our bigger attractions were invited to perform for our Nation's Capital. We also problem-solved several situations including construction of SLHS and no marked parking places for staging and a water main project being completed along the parade route.

Andrew Meier video-taped the parade this year with the use of his drone. You can see the 53-minute video on Somers website.

Again, we invited local food trucks to be stationed along the parade route for parade-goers to enjoy! 9-11 Tacos, Pawlie's Ice Cream, Trini's Ice Cream, De La Rosa's and Kona Ice reportedly had a steady flow of customers. Somers Fire Association ran their vending stand out of the fire station, J & M's grilled outside and SLHS Boosters sold food at the school entrance.

Somers Public Works crew worked hard days before and on the day of the parade to make things run smoothly and keep parade-goers safe.

Stephanie Funk personally met the new port-a-pottie vendor for placement at Somers Elementary, Neumiller Woods Park and the corner of Hwy E and Hwy H. There was already a portable bathroom at the Village Hall, on Kirchner's property and at SLHS, making 6 places to use the restroom along a 1.2 mile-long route.

This year's theme was "**Happy 250th Birthday, America!**" Local longtime farmer and community volunteer from the Town of Somers, Don Kruk, and his wife Barb were our parade marshals. They aptly drove an antique tractor with a trailer down the route.

Safety of everyone involved is our utmost priority and we worked closely with Somers Fire & Rescue, Kenosha County Sheriff, Somers Public works and administration to follow a safety plan. With threats of severe weather up until the morning of the parade, we were blessed with a partly cloudy afternoon and 82 degrees with a few rain drops at the end of the parade.

Ron Bailey of Silverspoon Entertainment deejayed in the staging area at Shoreland Lutheran High School. Somers Elementary began distributing flags at 1:10. Amanda Pulda took over retrieving the flags from the graves of veterans at Sunset Ridge Memorial Park. She had a sticker put on each flag indicating whose gravestone was marked and the branch of service they served in.

Willow Newell, Miss Wisconsin 2025 sang the National Anthem in SLHS's parking lot before Somers Fire & Rescue and several area fire departments kicked off the parade at 2:00 pm.

Following the fire and rescue vehicles and Rambler Band coach buses were our most important part of the parade line up - our Veterans! The American Legion Post 21 Color Guard and Riders, VFW Post 7038, the Lyon's locomotive, John Sorensen, Lot 31, Aeroworks Productions and Tom Giles military vehicles.

The parade marshals, Don & Barb Kruk, were followed by **SLHS** in Kraus Mack truck, the **Mike Schneider Polka Band**, and a **Jolly Giant Stiltwalker**.

In the Politician section, Joe Smith drove a few of the Village board trustees in a tractor and trailer, followed by Kenosha County Sheriff's Department, Zoerner for Sheriff, Dairy Queen, Teri Jacobsen, Jennifer Mack, Samantha Kerkman, **MGV Harmonia**, Tip McGuire, and Robert Wirsch. Newcomers, The **Jesse White Tumblers** awed parade-goers with their acrobatics! The Republican Party float was also in the parade.

Next were several classic cars; BCO Baxter Credit Union VW bus, Giorno's 1969 AMC, Stavlo's 1928 Model A Ford Pickup, John Compolo's (Elvis) Harley trike, 5 cars from the Game Changers Social Organization, Roger Williams Dodge Charger and Tony Gonzalez for Sheriff.

The local business/royalty/campaign section kicked off newcomers Bernie Brewer and Barrelman mascots from the Milwaukee Brewers in front of the Mariachi band. Culvers followed along with the **Valley Croft Farm** horse teams, **Dinder Bros. Circus mermaid**, **Miss Wisconsin 2025 Willow Newell**, beautiful Snap-On float, **Tripoli Shriners Long-Riders**, Danish Brotherhood, Mission 94 Firearms, Metz Machines, **Joey Douglas & the Lion's Club Car**, Jerry Smith Farms, **Arik the Wandering Juggler**, **Mad Plaid Brass**, Ted the Mailman, Jim Buskirk Construction, a **Pony team** ridden by Lisa Brockman and her daughter, WI Fairest of the Fair Kaelie Billingsley, **KUSD Rambler marching band**, Brian for Kenosha County Circuit Court, Proko Funeral Home, Kenosha Kingfish, James Beller for Sheriff, Bristol Progress Days queen, Step-by-Step Academy, AES Towing, Brooke Kreuser of Edward Jones, Ed Hibsich for State Assembly, Piasecki Funeral Home, Walmart, Heating & Cooling Solutions, Pro Towing, and First Student. Parade-goers enjoyed several freebies such as Dilly Bars, ice pops, free custard tokens, cookies, beach balls, vegetables, toys and hundreds of pounds of candy!

Parade-goers always know the end is near when they see the local tractors rolling down the street. This year Fenskes drove Case New Holland farm machines, The Funkin Farm, **River City Rhythm**, and finally, Ben Harbach concluded the parade along with Somer Fire & Rescue ambulance. We were able to get 86 entries out of the staging area in about 50 minutes!

Somers Independence Day Parade is solely funded by the generous support of the following sponsors: Andrea & Orendorff, James Armes, Baxter & Woodman, Bear Realty, Dejno's Trucking, Firehouse Performance, First Industrial, Golden Oil,

Mix, Pritzker Military Museum & Library, Professional Realty Associates, Proko Funeral Home, Reesman's Excavating & Grading, SCS Pike Creek, Jerry Smith Farms, Stream Realty, Tri City National Bank, Walmart and Wanasek. Shoreland Lutheran High School generously opens their facilities and parking lot for the staging area and parking. Somers Elementary allows the parade participants and parade goers their parking areas.

A special thank you to Ben Harbach, Jr. for helping with staging again!

Next year's Independence Day parade will take place at 2:00 pm on Sunday, July 4th.

We welcome volunteers interested in the commitment to plan our parade. We meet once a month from January until July. If you're interested in helping plan this Somers tradition, contact J. Schantek at 262-818-4448. Seeing the excitement of Somers parade-goers and participants is worth every second of the time and dedication involved!

Respectfully submitted,
Somers Parade Committee

Judy J. Schantek
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