WWII Living History Event Brings World War II History to Life in Macomb, October 9–11

Three-day event brings more than 100 reenactors, historic vehicles, battle reenactments and immersive WWII experiences to Veterans Park October 9–11



Macomb's WWII Living History Weekend

MACOMB, IL, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Macomb will step back in time this October as the WWII Living History Event will take over Veterans Park for an expanded three-day experience bringing World War II history to life through authentic reenactors, historic military vehicles, living-history encampments, battle reenactments and interactive exhibits.

Taking place October 9–11 at Veterans Park, 1800 E. University Drive, the free event will offer visitors an opportunity to see, hear and experience history from the perspective of the soldiers, civilians and communities who lived through World War II. Activities will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with the event concluding at 3 p.m. Sunday.

This year's event represents the first time the community has hosted the experience in its current expanded format, bringing together more than 100 reenactors and a wide range of historical programming and activities.

Visitors will be able to interact with reenactors portraying military and civilian personnel from multiple countries involved in World War II. Historically themed encampments will feature period-correct uniforms, equipment, vehicles, food and other elements designed to provide a glimpse into everyday life during the war.

The weekend will feature:

-Live Battle Reenactments: Scheduled woods battles and military skirmishes will demonstrate the tactics, sounds and experiences of combat operations.

-Authentic Reenactor Encampments: Explore camps representing Allied and Axis forces and learn about the people who lived and served during the war.
-WWII-Era Vehicles: Get an up-close look at operational jeeps, trucks, anti-tank guns and other period military equipment.
-Uniform & Weapons Demonstrations: Reenactors will interpret the uniforms, equipment and weapons used by various militaries and civilians during the war.
-Camp Ellis Displays: A special area will highlight the history of Camp Ellis, the U.S. Army training center and prisoner-of-war camp located near Ipava, Illinois, including historical artifacts.
-Children's Activities: Families can explore a Camp Ellis-themed children's recreation area designed to introduce younger visitors to the history of the era.
-Victory Garden: Learn about the important role gardens and food production played on the American home front.
-Military-Style Canteen: Visitors can experience a recreation of a wartime canteen while exploring the living-history displays.
-Local Vendors & Food Trucks: Enjoy food and browse offerings from local businesses and dealers in historical militaria.

The weekend will also feature several events throughout Macomb that expand the WWII experience beyond Veterans Park. On Friday evening, the Western Illinois Museum will host a WWII-themed USO Night featuring the Western Illinois University Jazz Studio Orchestra, along with swing dance instruction. WWII reenactors will also be stationed at the finish line of the WIU Fallen Soldiers 5K Run/Walk on Saturday morning.

Daily flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremonies will also take place at Veterans Park, with participation from representatives of the American Legion, Western Illinois University Department of Military Science (ROTC), Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. A military veterans hospitality tent will provide a welcoming space for veterans throughout the weekend.

HONORING LOCAL HISTORY DURING AMERICA 250

The timing of the WWII Living History Event carries additional significance in 2026 as communities across the country commemorate America's 250th anniversary. The national America250 initiative encourages communities to reflect on the nation's history and the contributions of the people who shaped it.

In Western Illinois, the weekend provides an opportunity to look at a specific chapter of that larger American story, including the experiences and contributions of Macomb and surrounding communities during World War II.

From Camp Ellis and the soldiers who trained there to the families and businesses supporting the war effort on the home front, the event will highlight how a national conflict was experienced at the local level.

“History really becomes three-dimensional when it is interactive,” said Tim Roberts, WIU History Professor and one of the organizers of the event. “No one celebrates the costs of war, but we can learn from the past by seeing, hearing, and feeling it from a real-time perspective.”

The WWII Living History Event is organized by the WWII Comes To Macomb: Living History Event Group and made possible through a collaboration of community and educational organizations, including the Western Illinois University Department of History, WIU Veterans Resource Center, Macomb Park District, Western Illinois Museum and Visit Unforgettable Forgottonia.

The event grew from a collaboration initiated in 2023, when Roberts reached out to reenacting event organizer and WIU alumnus Adam Bednar. The partnership has since grown into a community-wide effort combining historical interpretation, academic research and immersive living history.

MAKE A WEEKEND OF IT IN MACOMB

Visitors traveling to Macomb for the WWII Living History Event can make a weekend getaway out of their trip by exploring the area's restaurants, attractions, shopping and history.

While downtown, visitors can experience Macombopoly, a larger-than-life, 170,000-square-foot Monopoly experience celebrating Macomb native and Monopoly inventor Lizzie Magie. The free, app-powered experience takes visitors around downtown Macomb as they play a real-world version of the iconic board game.

With three days of living history at Veterans Park, special events at the Western Illinois Museum and plenty to explore throughout the community, the WWII Living History Event offers visitors a unique opportunity to experience Macomb's history while discovering what makes the community a destination worth visiting.

For more information about the WWII Living History Event and other things to see and do in the area, visit visitforgottonia.com.

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About Macombopoly
Macombopoly is a larger-than-life, app-powered Monopoly experience played on the downtown square of Macomb, Illinois. Set on the historic Courthouse Square, the 170,000-square-foot experience pays tribute to Lizzie Magie, the Macomb-born inventor who created The Landlord's Game in 1903, the direct predecessor to the Monopoly board game. The game is powered by eATLAS and free to play. More at visitforgottonia.com.

About Visit Unforgettable Forgottonia
Visit Unforgettable Forgottonia is the destination marketing organization for McDonough County

and the surrounding region of west-central Illinois, promoting the area's history, attractions, and experiences to visitors from across the state and beyond. More at visitforgottonia.com.

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