

Branches on the Vine

NEWS FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD

AUGUST 8 - 14, 2026

Men's Club Serves Food, Fellowship During Beacon Falls Concerts

- Story by Karen A. Avitabile

On Wednesday evenings in the summer, St. Michael Parish in Beacon Falls and its Men's Club bring the community together to unwind with live music, great food and camaraderie.

From June through mid-August, the town hosts a free summer concert series, featuring bands performing in the church's park gazebo on the grounds of St. Michael Church.

"The concerts bring everyone together in the community," says Parks and Recreation Commission member Caitlin Battis, who also organizes the performing bands. "The town loves it and the kids have a place to run around."

Concertgoers are invited to bring their own blankets, lawn chairs and picnic baskets. They can purchase refreshments from the Men's Club during the concerts.

A longstanding ministry of St. Michael Parish, the Men's Club supports the parish and the community at large.

The men sell hamburgers and cheeseburgers, hot dogs, a specialty sandwich, drinks, snacks and desserts. On occasion, they pair themed concerts with custom dishes, such as kielbasa and sauerkraut for bands playing Polish music.

Each week, the club sells some 50 hamburgers and 40 hot dogs, says club member James O'Dell, who oversees the shopping for the concerts.

Robert Maciejko grills up hamburgers and cheeseburgers. For a recent concert, he also prepared Italian sausage patties, serving them on a Portuguese roll with peppers.



Father Joy Jacob, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Beacon Falls, blesses members of the Men's Club before weekly concerts in the church park. In the photo are club members James O'Dell, center, and Raymond Binkowski. PHOTO BY KAREN A. AVITABILE

"I like hanging out with the men and having a good time," says Maciejko, who cherishes the close friendships he formed during his 15 years in the group.

To kick off the concerts, Father Joy Jacob, pastor of St. Michael Parish, leads the Men's Club in a group prayer. While the music is underway, he walks the grounds and greets everyone.

"The concerts are a good collaboration between the town and the church," Father Jacob says. "People are so happy."

Men's Club newcomer Brian Malota, a culinary instructor for the state of Connecticut, conducts food handling training for the club. After a training session with the men, he was invited to join the club.

"How could I not enjoy this?" he says with a smile, taking the reins grilling hot dogs during concert nights.

The Men's Club donates proceeds to the parish, the town's food bank, the community and "anybody who needs it," says longtime member and past president Raymond Binkowski. The club previously purchased a new sign for the church.

As they volunteer, the men create a tight-knit community and a sense of brotherhood. Throughout the year, the

Men's Club sponsors a Super Bowl sandwich drive, prepares refreshments for the church fair in May, organizes car and bottle drives and hosts year-round church dinners to bring parishioners together. Plus, the club is a sponsor of the town's Ron Barksdale Memorial Fishing Rodeo at Matthies Park, serving up breakfast, lunch, snacks and drinks during the event.

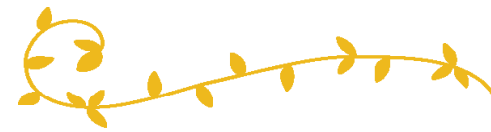
Father Jacob acknowledges that the Men's Club is a vital contributor to the parish and is always ready to lend a hand whenever the need arises. "It's a fantastic group," he adds.

Men's Club member Peter Betkowski, who is a lifelong parishioner of St. Michael Parish, says he feels "very blessed to be part of activities with fellow club members."

Weather permitting, concerts are held on Wednesdays at 6 p.m., June through mid-August, in the park adjacent to St. Michael Church, 25 Maple Ave., Beacon Falls. The concert schedule is published online at saintmichaelsonline.org. The Men's Club meets after the 8 a.m. Mass on Sundays except for the months of June, July, August and December. For more information or to join the Men's Club, call Karen in the parish office at 203.729.2504.



Upcoming Events



JUNE 4 - AUGUST 27 @ 6 - 8PM
SUMMER ALPHA YOUNG ADULT GROUP
St. Margaret Mary Church,
Rector's Basement, South Windsor

Welcome to all people ages 18 to 39 years old. Join us for food, friendship, faith, and fun, every Thursday throughout the summer! Every week we share pizza, watch faith-based videos, and participate in small group discussions. If you have any questions, text 860-816-6149. Our welcoming group would love to have you join us!



AUGUST 10 @ 8:30AM
30TH ANNUAL FRANCISCAN GOLF CLASSIC
Stanley Golf Course, New Britain

Come play golf at our annual Franciscan Golf Classic benefiting the Franciscan Life Center and Franciscan Home Care and Hospice Care, Monday, August 10, 2026. Bring a foursome, be a sponsor, be a dinner guest at the beautiful Stanley Golf Course in New Britain, CT. There are great opportunities to win prizes. The cost per player is \$195.00. To learn more visit franciscanlifecenter.square.site or call 203-237-8084.



AUGUST 13 - 16
UNIQUE BOUTIQUE TAG SALE
St. Teresa Of Calcutta Parish,
St. Bridget Church, Manchester

Come join and explore at the St. Bridget Church Tag Sale! On Thursday, August 13th from 5pm - 8pm admission fee is \$10.00. Thursday admission includes wine and cheese while you shop.

Admission Friday, August 14th from 4pm - 8pm is \$1.
Admission on Saturday, August 15th from 9am - 4pm is free.
Admission on Sunday, August 16th from 9am - 11am is free.

Items for sale include furniture, books, jewelry, collectibles, toys, hardware, artwork, household items, linens, glassware, sporting goods, holiday items, crafts, stationery, gardening supplies, luggage, pocket-books and much more!



AUGUST 15 @ 2PM **\$25**
ST. JUSTIN - ST. MICHAEL MULTICULTURAL JAZZ & GOSPEL FESTIVAL
St. Justin - St. Michael Parish Lawn, Hartford

Join us for the 6th Annual St. Justin - St. Michael Jazz & Gospel Concert celebrating diversity through music, food, and fellowship in a welcoming atmosphere. Delicious food included in the ticket price and amazing door prizes. Tickets cost \$25 per person; kids under 12 are FREE. Don't miss out on this joyous community event! Prepare for a day of incredible music and good vibes. Call the Parish Center Office 860-246-6897 for tickets and information.



AUGUST 21 @ 6:30PM
21+ CANDLELIGHT ROSARY & OUTSIDE SCAVENGER HUNT
Our Lady of Knock Parish, St. Patrick Church,
Farmington

Come and enjoy a candlelight rosary led by one of our Young Adults, followed by the rosary. There will be finger foods down in the Parish Hall followed by an amazing outside scavenger hunt.
6:30 PM Candlelight Rosary
7:15 PM Finger Foods & Outside Scavenger Hunt

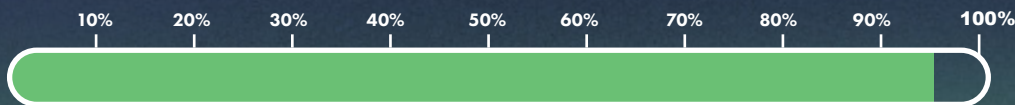


AUGUST 22 @ 4:30PM **\$15**
YOUNG CATHOLIC PROFESSIONALS HARTFORD YARD GOATS BASEBALL GAME
Dunkin' Park, Hartford

Join YCP Central CT for a night at Dunkin' Park in Hartford for a good 'ol Yard Goats game! The Hartford Yard Goats will be playing the Somerset Patriots. Be sure to stay to enjoy the fireworks after the final pitch! CP Belong Members: Complimentary ticket Non-members: Discount courtesy of YCP Central CT at \$15 per ticket. Gates open at 4:30PM and the game starts at 6:10PM. Email info@ycpcentralconnecticut.org to RSVP.

2026 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

Scan the QR code to learn how you can make a lasting impact!



Total Goal: \$10M 96.50% as of 7/27/26

\$9,650,276.76 in pledges from 26,631 generous donors

**This figure does not include bequests given to the Archbishop's Annual Appeal*



**WE ARE
ONE**

www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal