

Westfest brings in an unprecedented turnout during its annual festival

By Skylia Mumana.

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While many across the nation were grilling or visiting family this past Labor Day weekend, the town of West spent its time celebrating in a different way, through Westfest. According to its website, [Westfest](#) is an annual event held every Labor Day weekend in West, Texas to celebrate the Czech heritage in the area.

With a population of around 3,000 people, West is seen as a tight-knit community known for its deeply-rooted Czech culture, which tourists can see from its food stops, traditional music shops and long-established clothing stores.

Admission into the event ranges from \$5 to \$10 and features colorful fair games, a wide variety of food and contests. Food options span from sausage on a stick to funnel cakes, and there is also the kolache eating contest. While music was often playing throughout the event grounds, traditional polka acts and bands also performed. Other activities such as the kolache 5K race and Miss Westfest allows for this small-town event to easily attract tens of thousands to its door over the three day period. Typically starting at noon on Friday and lasting until 9 p.m. Sunday night, there are multiple things to see and do around Westfest.

Carrie Norman, a local resident of West, goes to Westfest every year with her family.

"I've been coming since I was a little girl and now I bring my own kids," Norman said. "It's fun, it's the community and friends coming together."

Westfest was originally founded in 1976 as a way for the community to raise funds for numerous projects, such as libraries, civic and cultural programs and youth groups. To date, Westfest has raised nearly \$1 million for the community of West. Westfest is also registered as a non-profit event and is run by hundreds of volunteers who sign up to help each year.

John E. Blaha Jr., president of the [Czech Heritage Society](#) in West, enjoys attending every year to help run its official booth at the event. Recently though, he's felt that while the event is fun, modern and family friendly, he believes that it has been "straying from its Czech roots," Blaha Jr. said.

"I believe that they get a little bit away from the heritage portion and things like that," Blaha Jr. said. "I think that maybe there could be just a little bit more emphasis on the Czech culture."

Overall, the event is known to provide cheap and fun entertainment for people of all ages and cultures to enjoy.