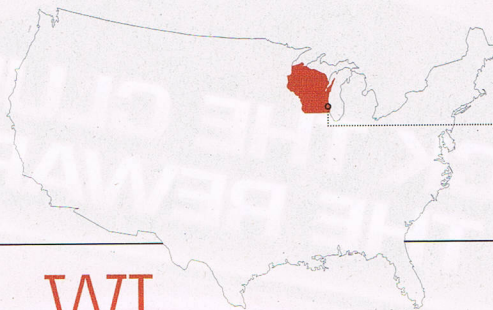


●●●  
**my hometown**



**Population:** 68,008 **Claim to fame:**  
Nicknamed Spring City. Late  
19th-century Waukesha was home  
to 14 spas, where wealthy visitors  
flocked to the water, which was  
thought to cure illness.

# Waukesha, WI

For Barbara Ruggeri, living in the town where she grew up gives her family the chance to experience her treasured childhood traditions—and create their own. **by Krista Meyerhoff**

**Time warp** A walking tour of downtown, filled with Victorian-style buildings and antiques shops, is a must for out-of-towners. At Waukesha County Museum visitors learn about our city's role as a stop on the Underground Railroad during the Civil War. It also hosts great traveling exhibits—last fall, we saw an amazing collection of unique ethnic dolls from around the world.

**Cultural ties** Every June our town honors its Hispanic community for three days at Fiesta Waukesha in Frame Park. My mom and I meet there to feast on Latin American cuisine and sip piña colodas. We can browse art booths set up along Fox River or catch a traditional Mayan dance performance, but the kids run straight to the amusement park rides.

**Sweet treat** In the summer our family can't resist at least a couple of trips each month to Divino Gelato Cafe, an Italian gelateria that's always packed. The kids could spend hours staring at the display case trying to choose among the variety of flavors—my picks are pistachio and raspberry.

**Winter wonderland** Despite below-freezing temperatures in January, all three of our sons welcome Waukesha Janboree, a

weekend of a dozen free events throughout the city. On Friday night the policemen and firemen battle for the title of best chef in a chili cook-off. Proceeds are donated to a food pantry. The next day Mario, Lorenzo and Matteo get their thrills on the 350-foot toboggan run at Lowell Park, then head downtown to check out the ice sculpture competition.

**Pitch perfect** Cutler Park offers music under the stars a couple of times each week from June through August. Every Wednesday local and regional artists play two hours of live jazz. The next night the 45-member Civic Band performs Broadway tunes and traditional marches. Andy and I settle by the band shell for the free outdoor concert, while the boys toss a football nearby.

**It takes a village** The families in our neighborhood are very close, so we hold several annual events together. In December our community sings Christmas carols while decorating the street. Summer begins with a traditional block party. It's nice to know that neighbors are watching out for us—and that we can still run next door to borrow a cup of sugar. ●



1. The area's past comes alive at Waukesha County Museum.
2. During a walk in Frame Park, you'll pass Fox River and old-fashioned street lamps.
3. Divino Gelato Cafe serves 150 flavors of Italian-style ice cream and sorbet.



**The Ruggeri family:** Mario, 17; Andy, Matteo, 11; Barbara; and Lorenzo, 15.

**Think your town is unique?** Let us know why we should profile it—and your family—in an upcoming issue. Send us an e-mail and family photo to [hometown@familycircle.com](mailto:hometown@familycircle.com).