

# Bagpipes & Bonfire: A Historical Event

Lake Forest Open Lands' primary fundraiser has been *Bagpipes & Bonfire*, an evening of games, Scottish dancers, and lavish picnics. From Highland games to dramatic bagpipe processions that culminate with the lighting of the bonfire, this event has become a beloved tradition that spans several generations.



**When did it begin?** John Dick was just a boy of 4 or 5 years old, growing up in the house next to the Ragdale estate. His neighbors, the Shaws and McCutcheons, both Scottish families, invited friends for a bonfire in the fall where one piper would come down the field and light the pile of brush that had been collected in the field for months. It was a sight he would not easily forget....

So when Lake Forest Open Lands was a growing organization and trying to raise money to continue its stewardship mission, this seemed like the perfect idea. But, Dick wanted to build on what he saw as a young boy and make it even more spectacular. "It's a tradition going back to the 1920s, but we stole it fair and square, and added on to it," he explains, smiling. "Because it's bagpipe oriented, we thought let's do it bigger and have everyone wear kilts. That's when we decided to make it more of a Scottish-themed event in honor of the Shaws and McCutcheons, so we brought in the highland athletes and Scottish dancing. Thirty-six years later, it's an event that holds an emotional tie for generations of families who celebrate this land.