

The Oktoberfest beginning Friday in La Crosse marks the end of an era...

The 53rd Fest will be the last one that follows the nine-day schedule introduced in 2000. Next year, Oktoberfest will be one long weekend, Thursday through Sunday. But retiring Festmaster Brad Sturm points out that even if the official festival is shorter in the future, the festival's royal family will continue a week-long schedule of traditional events, including visits to schools and nursing homes.

Sturm says he and his frau Lynn have tried to 'have fun' throughout their year as reigning Oktoberfest royals. The name of Sturm's successor will be revealed at Friday's Festmaster's Ball.