

LABOR DAY

FOUR THINGS THAT END AFTER THE HOLIDAY

1 IF YOU'RE A KID, FREEDOM It's back to school after Labor Day weekend.

2 BARBECUE SEASON Fans of brats and pork ribs shed a tear or two on Labor Day.

3 DAYS OFF Hooky-playing workers, the ones who fill their summer with long weekend trips, have to get back to work full-time after summer unofficially ends.

4 WHITE PANTS AND SHORTS Remember, white pants just don't look good after the Labor Day weekend. (Not that they looked all that good before it, either.)

The last blast

10 ways to enjoy Labor Day, the unofficial end to summer

BY DAN RAFTER | GATEHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

Most people aren't familiar with Labor Day's violent roots. This national holiday got its start after a long and often violent strike by the members of the American Railway Union, who were protesting George Pullman and his decision to lay off hundreds of railroad employees in 1893.

President Grover Cleveland eventually declared the strike a federal crime and sent 12,000 troops to break it. Before the strike's end in August of 1894, two men were killed, shot by U.S. deputy marshals.

Cleveland declared Labor Day a holiday in 1894 as a way to appease angry voters. Labor Day remained, but Cleveland did not. He was voted out of office that same year.

Today, we think of Labor Day as the unofficial end of summer, and a chance for one more barbecue or cookout. Here are 10 of the most popular Labor Day activities:

1 Family barbecue What better way to declare an end to summer than by grilling up burgers and brats with the family just one more time?

2 Weekend getaway Labor Day is the last three-day weekend of the unofficial summer season. That's why so many people travel on this weekend. Last year, AAA estimated that 34.38 million people traveled 50 miles or more during the Labor Day weekend.

3 Catch a local parade Many towns across the country hold Labor Day parades. These are a favorite way to kick off that day's barbecuing and picnicking.

4 Hit the beach It's a long school year, so pack up the kids and head for the beach one last time. It's always sad to put away the beach towels and sand shovels for another year, but at least you can say goodbye with a bang.

5 Watch the fireworks A growing number of communities celebrate Labor Day with fireworks shows. After Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, Labor Day marks the unofficial end of the summer fireworks season.

6 Attend a free concert Your town may hold free afternoon or evening concerts — a great opportunity to catch a local band or orchestra.

7 Hold a neighborhood block party Block parties are a great way to bring a neighborhood together. Bring some potato salad or watermelon and pull up a lawn chair. Let the kids run around and burn off their last bit of summer energy.

8 Appreciate the fact that you still have a job According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national unemployment rate hit 9.4 percent in May of this year. If you're still holding down a job, take a moment on Labor Day to be thankful.

9 Volunteer There are many people without jobs this Labor Day. Take your family to a shelter or soup kitchen to serve those who are less fortunate.

10 Get ready for the school year Though many schools start holding classes before Labor Day, the academic year begins in earnest after the three-day weekend. Get your children ready for the rigors of the school year by moving up bedtimes and encouraging more reading.

Sources: AAA, PBS.org, Bureau of Labor Statistics.