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HOLIDAY LIGHTS FESTIVAL SHINES BRIGHT DESPITE COVID PANDEMIC
Celebrating the Incredible Spirit of This Community and Spreading Holiday Cheer

(OMAHA, Neb.) Nov. 12, 2020 – The Holiday Lights Festival, produced by Mayor Jean Stothert and Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation, celebrates its 21st season this year. Even in the light of the community’s new normal, the Festival will offer festive lighting displays and activities for the whole family, while also helping neighbors who may be facing challenging times.

Due to ongoing construction at the Gene Leahy Mall, this year’s lighting display, like last year, will illuminate the Old Market and surrounding streets with white lights, garland, and festive décor from November 20 through January 4. The lights will span from 10th to 13th Streets, and from Harney to Jackson Streets.

The lights serve as the focal point of the Festival and stretch throughout the Old Market. The display also covers North and South Omaha along 24th Street. The lights will shine nightly for six weeks.

Holiday Lights Festival events and activities have been modified this year following public health guidelines and recommendations to keep families and the community safe this season.

“The Omaha community will enjoy the Holiday Lights Festival’s family-friendly activities throughout the season,” said Richard Callahan, Interim Executive Director of Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation. “Festivalgoers can look forward to the Festive Lighting Displays, KETV Drive-Through Family Festival, New Year’s Eve Fireworks Spectacular, and the Shine the Light on Hunger campaign that supports Food Bank for the Heartland.”

An integral part of the Festival is the communitywide campaign to “Shine the Light on Hunger.” The campaign, led by Conagra Brands Foundation, is a rallying call to leaders, businesses and families throughout the local community to support essential front-line hunger relief efforts and provide meals for those in need. All proceeds benefit Food Bank for the Heartland and the work they do to support and empower the community.

Due to the impact of the pandemic, food insecurity across the Food Bank’s 93-county service area jumped from 207,000 to over 296,000 people – an increase of 43 percent. The Food Bank has distributed

more than 18.8 million meals to children, families, and seniors in the Heartland facing hunger during the pandemic – this is a 72 percent increase over the average number of meals provided previously.

From November 12 through December 31, community members are encouraged to drop off nonperishable food at collection barrels placed at Omaha-area locations, including Baker’s Supermarkets. Monetary donations can be made online or by simply texting “FOOD” to 74121. To learn about additional ways to support the campaign, visit holidaylightsfestival.org.

Conagra Brands Foundation will generously match all campaign funds up to \$100,000. Furthermore, Baker’s Supermarkets has generously pledged \$20,000 on behalf of their Zero Hunger Zero Waste commitment.

Omaha’s Millennium Lights was originally created to celebrate the milestone year 2000 with the vision to turn it into an annual holiday season tradition called the Holiday Lights Festival. The celebration expanded to encompass a series of festive activities and events beloved by the community.

2020 Holiday Lights Festival Schedule:

Lighting Displays

November 20 – January 4

Old Market | North & South 24th Street

Festive lighting displays will enhance the joy and beauty of the season! Lights will be illuminated every evening in the Old Market and in North and South Omaha along 24th Street through January 4, 2021.

KETV Drive-Through Family Festival

Sunday, December 6 | 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Omaha Mounted Patrol Barn - 615 Leavenworth Street

To keep the community safe, families can enjoy a free and festive drive-through experience at the Omaha Police Mounted Patrol Barn! The drive-through event will include picking up craft kits (first come, first serve and one per vehicle) to do as a family, holiday characters and Santa, trotting police horses, and holiday entertainment - all in the warmth and safety of your vehicle. The First 500 vehicles will receive one complimentary *Paddington Bear* book, courtesy of the Omaha Public Library. Participating organizations include Omaha Mounted Patrol Barn, The Durham Museum, Omaha Public Library, Omaha Children’s Museum, and Downtown YMCA.

New Year’s Eve Fireworks Spectacular

Thursday, December 31 | 7 p.m.

Launch & viewing location:

Near CHI Health Center & TD Ameritrade Park (near 10th & Cass Streets)

Guests can view the spectacular fireworks show in the warmth and safety of their vehicle! Free parking is available in MECA Lots A, B and C (near the CHI Health Center) and Gallup Parking Lots (1001 Gallup Drive) – lots open at 6 p.m. This incredible show will fill the sky with bursts of color choreographed to explode on cue to a unique musical score, *Everyday Heroes*. Tune in to STAR 104.5 to hear the music!

Shine the Light on Hunger Campaign

November 12 – December 31

You can make this year a little brighter for those in need this holiday season! Led by Conagra Brands Foundation, the Shine the Light on Hunger campaign is a rallying call to support front-line hunger relief efforts and provide meals for those in need. All proceeds benefit Food Bank for the Heartland.

Sponsors

The Holiday Lights Festival is produced by Mayor Jean Stothert and the Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation with media sponsors KETV Channel 7 and STAR 104.5.

Event sponsor Conagra Brands.

Shining Star sponsors include Douglas County Board of Commissioners; Lamar Outdoor Advertising; The Sherwood Foundation; Union Pacific; City of Omaha, and Peter Kiewit Foundation.

Radiant Glow sponsors include Anonymous; Applied Underwriters, Inc.; Big Red Keno; Broadmoor; Fiserv; Gavilon; Jacobs; Kiewit Companies Foundation; The Lozier Foundation; Mammel Family Foundation; Moglia Family Foundation; Noddle Companies; Omaha Public Power District; Pinnacle Bank; Valmont Industries, Inc.; and WoodmenLife.

Bright Light sponsors include Ag Processing Inc.; Bank of the West; Baxter Auto Group; Baird Holm LLP; CHI Healthcare; Circo Enterprises; Downtown Improvement District; Kutak Rock LLP; Security National Bank; Tenaska; and Wade Trim.

For more information, visit holidaylightsfestival.org.

About Holiday Lights Festival

The idea of decorating Omaha with holiday lights had been discussed by downtown advocates for many years. The occasion of the millennium provided the impetus for the project. In 1999, a coalition of city officials, corporations and foundations chose to present a legacy gift of holiday lights to the City of Omaha as the Millennium Lights celebration. That first year, more than 60,000 people came downtown to witness the lighting ceremony. The Downtown Omaha Inc. Foundation was established the following year to continue Millennium Lights as the Holiday Lights Festival. The Shine the Light on Hunger campaign, sponsored by Conagra Brands Foundation and in partnership with Food Bank for the Heartland, was added to the Holiday Lights Festival in 2007.