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MEDIA ALERT

“OH, WHAT FUN!” HOLIDAY SEASON COMES ALIVE IN DOWNTOWN TEMPE WITH FANTASY OF THE LIGHTS HOLIDAY PARADE AND TREE LIGHTING ON NOV. 26

From Parade and Tree Lighting to Good Eats, Gifts and Appearance by Santa, Holiday Tradition Enjoyed by Boys and Girls of All Ages Has Something for Everyone

WHAT: 'Tis the season for making spirits bright in Downtown Tempe with the 28th annual Fantasy of Lights Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting taking place as part of “Oh, What Fun! holiday celebrations on Friday, Nov. 26 from 4-9 p.m.

As Arizona families along with newly arrived snowbirds and visitors from across the nation flood into the Valley for the holidays, they'll be treated to a breath-taking display of thousands of colorful sparkly lights illuminating downtown Tempe. With something for everyone, the whole family will enjoy the magic on Mill, complete with a holiday parade, tree lighting ceremony, holiday shopping and special visitors from the North Pole.

“Each year, the savviest attendees make a day of the event by arriving before the festivities begin to enjoy an early dinner or pick up some holiday gifts from the countless restaurants and shops lining the streets while scouting out the best viewing spots for the parade,” said Kate Borders of Downtown Tempe Authority.

The festivities kick off at 4 p.m., where attendees will have a chance to grab a snack from one of the many food and beverage vendors lining the streets of Mill Ave or shop for local handmade goods from various vendors and artisans at the signature Holiday Market on 5th Street. An hour later at 5 p.m., spectators will enjoy live music as local artists entertain the growing crowd at Centerpoint Plaza on 7th Street just west of Mill Ave. The parade begins promptly at 6 p.m. with floats of all sizes, performers, dancers, entertainers and the one-and-only Santa Claus riding merrily on his festive float.

Downtown Tempe will also celebrate excellence in Arizona by appointing special grand marshals who have made significant achievements, to lead the parade. The 2021 grand marshals include four-time Paralympian, Kaitlyn Verfuert (Wheelchair Tennis, Outrigger Canoe); three-time Paralympian, Erik Hightower (Track and Field); USA Rugby player and Olympian, Brett Thompson; four-time Paralympian, Eric Bennett (Recurve Archery); Olympian Delaney Schnell (Diving); 12-year-old Alena Wicker (sophomore at ASU, founder of Brown STEM Girl™, Brown STEM Foundation™); and members of Cahokia SocialTech + Artspace (a female-owned, indigenous-led platform for creative placemaking) which includes Melody Lewis, Eunique Yazzie, Adan Madrigal, Brian Skeet, Candace Hamana, Cora Jean Quiroz, Claudia Lopez, Tashena Lopez, Jesse Dorian Yazzie, and Dustin Lopez. A full bio on all Grand Marshals is available at downtowntempe.com/post/2021parademarshals.

The parade will be followed by the Tree Lighting Ceremony, where Santa Claus and Tempe City Council will officially open the holiday season with the lighting of Downtown Tempe's 40-foot holiday tree at 7 p.m. Following the parade, Santa will be ready to strike a pose with boys and girls of all ages in his holiday tent until the event concludes at 9 p.m.

Downtown Tempe is encouraging all attendees to make the season bright for thousands of families struggling through food insecurity by dropping off a jar of peanut butter at receptacles near Centerpoint Plaza as part of the Tempe Community Action Agency's Peanut Butter Drive.

Full details about the street parade, tree lighting ceremony, holiday market, live entertainment, Santa photos, and so much more are available at downtowntempe.com/StreetParade.

Also, for more information or to apply to participate in the parade, please visit www.downtowntempe.com/FantasyofLights.

WHY:

The Fantasy of Lights Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting is a long-standing Tempe tradition that kicks off the magic of the holiday season, while giving families the chance to explore downtown and savor the festive sights, sounds, and smells. With food and artisans lining the streets, a holiday market, live entertainment and more, the event has become one of the most important community festivals in the state. This is the first of four events this holiday season, which also include the Tempe Festival of the Arts, Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade and Second Sundays on Mill Holiday Market, which run every weekend from Nov. 26 to Dec. 12. More information about “Oh, What Fun” seasonal events, including parades, art, holiday experiences and more, can be found at downtowntempe.com/Holiday21.

The event has been carefully evaluated and modified, where possible, to incorporate safety measures that help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Downtown Tempe is also incorporating educational awareness into the events this fall/winter to encourage safe participation.

WHEN:

4 p.m.: Event Begins

- Scope out the best parade viewing spots while exploring downtown
- Grab a snack from one of dozens of vendors lining Mill Ave.
- Eat, drink & shop local handmade goods from various vendors at the Holiday Market located on 5th St.
- Give back to families in need by bringing an unopened jar of peanut butter for Tempe Community Action Agency's Peanut Butter Drive. (Donation receptacles located near Centerpoint Plaza)

5 p.m.: Centerpoint Plaza (7th Street just west of Mill Ave.)

- Live music and entertainment from local artists

6 p.m.: Parade Begins (Mill and 3rd Street)

- The parade starts on Mill Ave. and 3rd Street and heads south to 7th Street where it turns onto Maple, then takes a left at 5th Street where it ends.

7 p.m.: Tree Lighting and More (Centerpoint Plaza, 7th Street just west of Mill Ave.)

- Tree Lighting Ceremony: Santa Claus and Tempe City Council open the holiday season with the lighting of Downtown Tempe's 40-foot holiday tree.
- Santa Claus makes an appearance and then heads to his tent to take holiday pictures with attendees until 9 p.m.
- Entertainment, including live music from local artists, through the evening.
- Drop off an unopened jar of peanut butter to support Tempe Community Action Agency's Peanut Butter Drive. (Donation receptacles located near Centerpoint Plaza)

9 p.m.: Event Concludes

WHERE:

Mill Avenue, Downtown Tempe

WHO:

The award-winning Downtown Tempe Authority is a private, nonprofit organization that works in partnership with the City of Tempe to increase the value of Downtown Tempe through enhanced management, safety, marketing, and promotional services on behalf of DTA members and other downtown stakeholders.

INFO:

More information about Downtown Tempe's Fall/Winter festivities this season, including a complete lineup of events, is available at downtowntempe.com/events.

VISUALS:

To access and download visuals from the Fantasy of Lights Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting in previous years, click here: <https://bit.ly/3BCJo7m>