



## 2024 Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival Recap

For 26 seasons, the Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival presented by Johnson Financial Group has made spirits bright with its animated sculptures, interactive displays, and twinkling street décor. This brilliant holiday tradition attracted families to Downtown Milwaukee, November 21, 2024 – January 1, 2025. While here, visitors created holiday memories by attending the Festival's dynamic kickoff ceremony, dropping letters into Santa's Mailbox, jumping on the Jingle Bus, visiting with Santa at several events, and exploring The Ornament Trail. Here are a few highlights from the 2024 season.

### KICKOFF CEREMONY PREVAILS DESPITE WINTER STORM

#### 1,900+ Guests Braved the Elements

It was a messy start for the Festival's much-anticipated kickoff. A morning snowstorm, gusty winds and rain, created unfavorable conditions. Despite the disruption, over 1,900 attendees made their way to Pere Marquette Park for the 26th annual celebration presented by Johnson Financial Group. The night included live music, dance performances, fireworks, a welcome from Johnson Financial Group President Jim Popp, and a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. Over 2,000 cookies and cups of hot cocoa were consumed, and hundreds of light-up wands were given away. In addition, guests were treated to free Jingle Bus rides post-show, thanks to KB Excursions.



### WISN 12 AIRS THE KICKOFF ON TWO NIGHTS

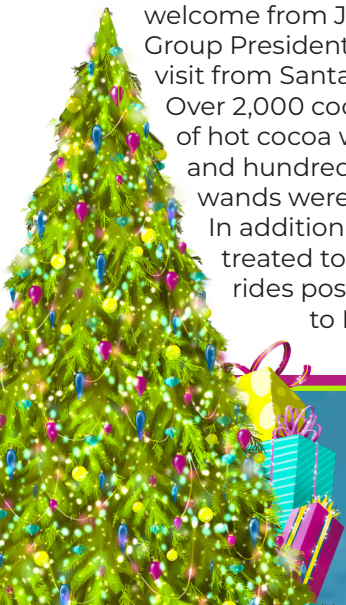
#### 46,500+ Impressions for "Holiday Lights: Live"

Hosted by WISN 12 news anchors Gerron Jordan and Diana Gutierrez, "Holiday Lights: Live" was once again a magical success. WISN 12 aired the kickoff ceremony live at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 21, thanks to support from Stein's Garden & Home. The show re-aired at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 24. In total, the station's two broadcasts netted 46,549 impressions for adults 18+.

### NEW CHANDELIERS AND SCULPTURES PROVIDE EXQUISITE BACKDROP

#### 500,000+ Lights Illuminated Downtown

"Community Spirit Park" at Cathedral Square Park, "¡Felices Fiestas!" presented by Generac at Pere Marquette Park, "Santa's Celebration Square" powered by We Energies" at Zeidler Union Square and "Slice of Ice Lights" at Red Arrow Park continued to delight guests with larger-than-life sculptures and a collective half million lights. Cascading chandeliers with a new gold and silver motif soared above Wisconsin Avenue intersections and decorative sculptures embellished the harp lamps from 6th Street to Prospect Avenue. Meanwhile, the mood at "Community Spirit Park" continued as over 70 trees were decorated by schools and community organizations.



# Peace, Love & Lights



## WEBSITE REMAINS GO-TO RESOURCE

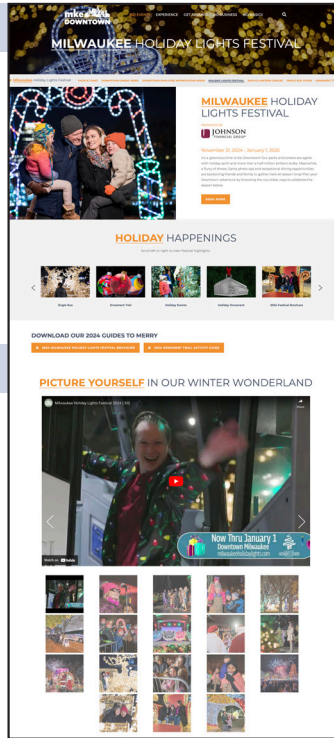
### Nearly 80,000 Website Sessions

Between October 31, 2024, and January 1, 2025, 79,982 sessions and 109,479 pageviews were accrued on the Festival's website. Approximately 60% of sessions came from organic search, 20% were direct, 9% were referred, 6% came from organic social and 4% from paid search.

## JINGLE BUS TOURS CONVENIENTLY LINK SIGHTS

### 3,200+ Riders Jumped on the Jingle Bus

Visitors were acquainted with Downtown's lights and sights via the return of the Jingle Bus – a motorcoach bus operated by KB Excursions. Riders could purchase tickets online or in-person. Meanwhile, Milwaukee Downtown's Public Service Ambassadors narrated the 40-minute tour, which departed from the Courtyard Milwaukee Downtown. Guests enjoyed food and beverage options from the adjacent 3rd Street Market Hall, along with discounted parking thanks to Interstate Parking. Spanish tours were also offered on select nights through a partnership with Estamos Unidos.



## SANTA'S MAILBOX CONTINUES TO CONNECT GENERATIONS

### 1,300+ Handwritten Letters Delivered to Area Children

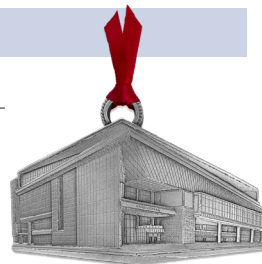
Thanks to support from Educators Credit Union, Serving Older Adults and National Letter Carriers Association Branch 2, over 1,300 letters were personalized and mailed to children in our community. Letters were received at Santa's Mailbox in Cathedral Square Park.



## ORNAMENT SERIES CELEBRATES DOWNTOWN LANDMARKS

### 240+ Baird Center Ornaments Sold

Milwaukee Holiday Lights Festival ornaments continue to be one-of-a-kind keepsakes. Each year features an iconic downtown landmark cast in pewter. The 2024 edition was Baird Center. Over the course of the season, nearly 400 ornaments were purchased across the series, which now totals 24 editions.



## 44-PAGE GUIDE HIGHLIGHTS HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

### 7,500 Brochures Distributed

The Festival produced a comprehensive events guide highlighting shows, sporting events and art exhibitions. The brochure was made available online and mailed to Milwaukee Downtown's database of stakeholders, past festgoers, and friends of the organization.







## The Ornament Trail Returned for Its Second Year

### THE ORNAMENT TRAIL RETURNS

#### 15 Hand-Painted Baubles Lined Wisconsin Avenue and Beyond

Pedestrians were again greeted by the return of The Ornament Trail. The art installation adorned Wisconsin Avenue from 10th Street to Prospect Avenue, as well as four select locations along Water Street and in the Historic Third Ward. It featured 15 larger-than-life ornaments, each hand-painted by a locally or nationally renowned artist with Milwaukee ties.

### SANTA, MRS. CLAUS, AND SARAH FIEREK ADD TO MERRIMENT

#### Two Christmas Cavalcades Delighted Spectators

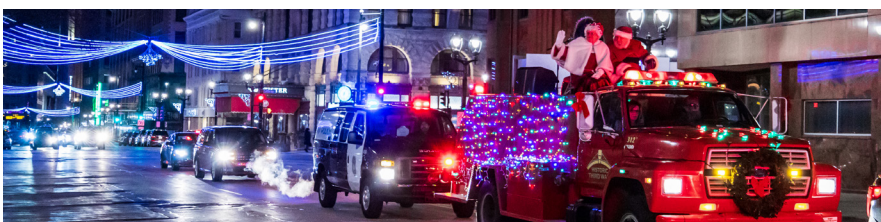
Festivalgoers received a delightful glimpse of Santa and Mrs. Claus aboard the Historic Third Ward's vintage firetruck on two select nights in December. One evening featured Black Santa. Jazz singer Sarah Fierek tagged along on both evenings to provide the festive soundtrack. Attendance at Cathedral Square Park on each night topped 1,500+ visitors.



### CHRISTMAS' MOST FAVORITE COUPLE CONTINUES TO CHARM

#### 1,000+ Participants Attended Cocoa with the Clauses

Families gathered at Cathedral Square Park to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus. Elves and other holiday characters were available for this annual cocoa klatch presented by Madison Medical Affiliates. Nearly 300 professional portraits were taken of families. Free hot cocoa and cookies sponsored by Taste of Home were provided (750 of each!), and over 500 goodie bags were distributed to kids.







NYEMKE CLOSES OUT THE YEAR

### 300+ Guests Attended End-of-Year Bash

Milwaukee Downtown and Events By Design collaborated again on NYEMKE. Held at Hilton Milwaukee City Center, the event featured nonstop entertainment, an open bar, food stations, live art, and performances. The theme of this year's celebration was Casino Royale.

PAID MEDIA REACHED FAMILIES AT HOME, IN THE CAR AND AT WORK

### 3.8+ Million Paid Media Impressions

The Festival continued to partner with WISN 12 and 95.7 BIG FM as its official media partners. Other print, broadcast and digital outlets were utilized to target women 35-64 within a 15-mile radius of Downtown Milwaukee.

PUBLIC RELATIONS BUILDS AWARENESS OF THINGS TO DO

### 4.5+ Million Earned Media Impressions

Throughout the six-week Festival, over \$476,000 in earned media coverage and 4.5 million impressions were obtained through broadcast, print and web outlets.

SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS SOAR AS FAMILIES SEEK WINTER ACTIVITIES

### 444,286+ Impressions Generated

### 1,502+ New Followers Gained



### 2,000+ Social Engagements in the Latino Communities

Social media is a vital tool for informing consumers of the plethora of things to do downtown. During the Festival, the organic campaign generated over 900,000 impressions!



More information available at [www.milwaukeeholidaylights.com](http://www.milwaukeeholidaylights.com).

For sponsorship opportunities, contact Isabel Ullrich at [iullrich@milwaukeedowntown.com](mailto:iullrich@milwaukeedowntown.com).