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HDR, City to partner on spectacular Winter Wonderfest event Dec. 11

HARRISONBURG, Va. – As temperatures cool and radio stations start playing a lot more Mariah Carey, something wonderful is on the way to Harrisonburg’s Downtown.

The community is invited to celebrate the magic of the holidays in Downtown Harrisonburg at Winter Wonderfest on Saturday, Dec. 11, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. And this year, the free holiday event is bigger than ever!



The Friendly City Merchants and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) have teamed up to bring the community a day packed full of activities and entertainment for all ages, which creates a wonderful backdrop for holiday shoppers to support small businesses. Enjoy horse and carriage rides, live performances, beautiful window displays, carolers, holiday shopping, a holiday movie at Court Square Theater, and more!

The day will also include HDR’s annual Cookie Tour, a ticketed event that features a dozen stops and a variety of cookies from local bakeries. The Sip ‘n Stroll permit will be in effect for this event as well – allowing you to do your holiday shopping and explore Downtown with your favorite adult beverage or warm, seasonal drink in-hand.

The event schedule includes:

- 11 a.m. to Noon: The Arc of Harrisonburg & Rockingham – Santa Run, Walk, ‘n Roll
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Free play reading at Court Square Theater presented by the Valley Playhouse “The Girl Who Made Emus Believe They Could Fly” by local playwright Dwayne Yancey
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Live nativity at Asbury Church
- 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Cookie Tour
- 1 to 4 p.m.: Horse and carriage rides around downtown
- 2 p.m.: Free, 30-45-minute dance showcase at Court Square Theater featuring Shenandoah Contemporary Dance Theatre (SCDT), Dance & Company’s performing group
- 4 p.m.: The movie *Elf* at Court Square Theater. Free admission with a receipt from a purchase made at a Downtown business during Winter Wonderfest. Or a \$5 donation without receipt.

- 5 to 8 p.m.: The Rosy Co. Outdoor Photobooth at Denton Park
- 6:30 to 8 p.m.: Concert on Court Square featuring Spencer Hatcher Music
- 8 p.m.: Tree Lighting Ceremony at Court Square
- A special appearance from Santa and Mrs. Claus – Time TBD

“Shoppers love the experience that Downtown Harrisonburg offers for a fun, relaxed day out while seeking unique gifts from independent retailers,” HDR Executive Director Andrea Dono said. “But this year, we’re taking that experience up a few notches by building a holiday festival around shopping small.”

This year’s Wonderfest also will include a special partnership with Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation, which will bring a unique, family-friendly spin on its Holiday Parade to Downtown this year. Instead of the traditional parade, which cannot take place this year due to pandemic safety measures, Winter Wonderfest will include stationary floats staged throughout Downtown for attendees to seek out and enjoy.

Each parade float will bring its own special flair to the celebration, as families get the opportunity to get up close to check out the unique decorations and interact with participants at their comfort.

“We are so excited to partner with our friends at HDR to put on what we expect to be a truly wonderful Wonderfest,” Harrisonburg Parks & Rec Special Events Manager Matt Little said. “Being able to bring our community together and provide families with a safe, fun festivity like this is at the heart of Parks & Rec’s mission.”

Winter Wonderfest is a free community festival made possible through generous sponsorship by Tropical Smoothie Café, Island Wing Co. Grill & Bar, Rockingham Insurance, Harrisonburg Radio Group, iHeart Media, Gaines Group Architects, The Harrisonburg Homes Team, Brown Edwards, Matchbox, and James River Equipment.

Find more information about the event at www.downtownharrisonburg.org.

City hopes traditional Holiday Parade can return in 2022

Out of an abundance of caution related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and due to expected crowd size at any City of Harrisonburg parade, City officials have consulted with health and wellness experts and determined the traditional Holiday Parade cannot take place this year. It is the City’s hope that traditional parades in Harrisonburg’s Downtown can continue in 2022, but decisions on events will always be made with the safety of the Harrisonburg community in mind.

Anyone wishing to receive their COVID-19 vaccination can find a nearby clinic at www.harrisonburgva.gov/vaccine.

Please visit www.harrisonburgva.gov/holiday-parade for all parade questions.

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