

Jerseyville Downtown Country Christmas Festival: Free, Fun and "Very Close to a Hallmark Movie"

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE - The Jerseyville Downtown Country Christmas festival is “very close to a Hallmark movie.”

Michael Ward, the president of the organization, has heard this sentiment more than once in the nine years since the festival began. Scheduled for Nov. 25, 2023, the event brings families to downtown Jerseyville for a completely free day of Christmas crafts and games — and a special jolly visitor.

“Our family was very big on Christmas and family tradition, so it’s nice to be able to pass that stuff along to other families,” Ward said. “The biggest thing is that it’s for the kids. No matter the social standing or financial standing of the family, the kids can participate, and that’s what we really wanted to create.”

The day starts at 1 p.m. with Santa’s arrival at Lions Club Park. He will set up his chair at Royal Bank downtown so kids can visit and take free photos with him throughout the afternoon. At City Center Park, families can try out over 20 activities, take a hayride downtown and enjoy live music.

The festival comes to an end at 4:30 p.m., and everyone is invited to gather at 5 p.m. for the lighting of the City of Jerseyville’s Christmas tree. Follow Rudolph’s Red Nose Parade to Dolan Park to check out more lights and a second 26-foot Christmas tree.

The tree lighting marks the beginning of the Bright Nights: A Celebration of Lights drive-thru display, which runs until Dec. 25. The route passes through the Jersey County Courthouse, Rotary Park, Dolan Park and the downtown district and boasts over 183,000 lights. The lights will sync to music every hour on the hour until 10 p.m., every night from Nov. 25 to Dec. 25.

Planning the festival and Bright Nights display is “months of work,” Ward admitted, but it’s worth it to kick off the holiday season for so many excited guests. He pointed out that the festival is only a block away from Jerseyville’s business district on State Street, so many families divide and conquer; kids can hang out at the festival with a grown-up while someone else gets a start on the holiday shopping.

“It’s one of the busiest shopping days for Jerseyville,” Ward said. “It’s a good day for our businesses and our restaurants, and the community counts on it now. It’s important to volunteers to continue with this tradition.”

The Downtown Country Christmas group also promotes local nonprofits during the festival, and they encourage attendees to check out vendors at the Christmas Craft Bazaar planned for the same day at the Holy Ghost gym. The festival and Bright Nights display are free, though donations are welcome. These events are funded through donations, sponsors and grants, and everyone who plans and works the festival is a volunteer.

Ward noted that businesses who are interested in sponsoring Bright Nights will have their logo displayed throughout the month, where over 25,000 visitors are expected to drive through to see the lights. If you want to sponsor Bright Nights or volunteer at the festival, contact Ward at downtowncountrychristmas@gmail.com.

It might require a lot of work to make it all happen, but Ward's not complaining. Ultimately, he said, it's about giving the community's kids a good Christmas experience.

“We know that times are tough for everybody and money is tight, but we wouldn't be able to do this without people's support. And you never know how much of a difference this festival makes to a kid,” Ward said. “That's what I always remember whenever we're spending money or trying to figure something out. ‘Is this the right move?’ If it gives a kid a little difference in the holiday season, sure. We go for it.”

For more information about the Jerseyville Downtown Country Christmas festival or the Bright Nights: A Celebration of Lights display, visit the [Facebook page](#) or [official website at DowntownCountryChristmas.com](#).

Downtown Country Christmas Festival

SAT. NOV. 25TH, 2023

CITY CENTER PARK, JERSEYVILLE

1PM SANTA ARRIVES AT LIONS CLUB PARK

1:15-4:30 KIDS ACTIVITIES, LIVE ENTERTAINMENT, FOOD

5PM LIGHTING OF THE CITY OF JERSEYVILLE CHRISTMAS TREE

5:30 RUDOLPH'S RED NOSE PARADE TO DOLAN PARK

6:30PM SEASONAL LIGHTING KICKOFF AT DOLAN PARK:

Bright Nights

A Celebration of Lights

NOV. 25TH - DEC. 25TH, 2023

JERSEYVILLE, IL

130,000 LIGHTS, 2 PARKS, COURTHOUSE, AND CITY CENTER,
DRIVE THROUGH DISPLAY AT DOLAN PARK, PHOTO OPS, AND
SO MUCH MORE.



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.DOWNTOWNCOUNTRYCHRISTMAS.COM OR
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2023 THEME:

Building memories to last a lifetime!

