

## Portland's Holiday Fest on the Grand comes again adding some twists

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PORTLAND, Mich. — Downtown Portland will become full of holiday cheer this weekend, as the annual Portland Holiday Fest comes to town this weekend.

The festival will be held in downtown Portland from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday.

"It's a lot of fun, and there were a lot of people downtown last year," said Portland Downtown Development Authority Director and Main Street Manager Patrick Reagan.

The event is a cooperation from the Main Street Program and the Portland Community Arts Council.

"It's in cooperation with Main Street and the art council, and all the music and crafts are by the art council," said Main Street Board Chairperson Joel VanSlambrouck. "Combining those create a really good function."

This year's Holiday Fest will have some returning festivities, including the window decorating contest, the horse-drawn carriage through downtown Portland, the Portland Garden Club's annual bird-feeder wreath making workshop, children's games, the Portland Art Council's Luminary Lane and a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Clause.

"This is where we get a lot of businesses involved, and we want to show what's great about downtown," said Reagan. "There will be a window decorating contest, great in store sales, promotions and demonstrations."

A new event for this year's festivities will include a Snowball Drop, where numbered ping pong balls will be dropped at 6 p.m. Friday on Maple Street in front of the Portland Playhouse. Roughly 600 ping pong balls will be dropped.

The numbers will correlate with participating stores where a small prize will be given. Everyone who enters their ping pong balls at their location will enter into a drawing for a chance to win a large prize.

"It's trying to get people to re-discover our downtown and give them a reason besides the great service and products to remind them," said Reagan. "We have about 15 businesses taking part in the Snowball Drop."

Due to the overwhelming success of last year's carriage ride, the event will host the rides both days, from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday and 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday.

"They are a little tour of downtown, and those were big last year," said Reagan. "We had them on Friday last year, and had a line up to 9 o'clock, so we decided to bring them back twice this year."

Tickets for the carriage rides are \$3 for adults, and \$2 for children.

There will also be a lot of activity for families to participate in, and arts, crafts and games for children.

"It's a lot of fun, there is something for everybody going on from little kids to grownups," said Reagan. "Restaurants will have food and drink specials, there will be a kids ornaments workshop and a lot of fun events for the kids. It's really a family friendly event."

Also at the event, there will be a workshop adding a modern twist to the classic mistle toe called a kissing ball.

"A kissing ball is like a modern day mistle toe, and it's a round mix of holiday greens," said Stacy Feldpausch, owner of Country Cupboard Floral and Gifts and hosting the Kissing Ball class.

The class will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, and noon to 2 p.m. on Saturday. Cost is \$25.

There will be roughly 25 businesses participating in this year's event, and a detailed schedule is on the Main Street

Program's website at [www.portlandmainstreet.org](http://www.portlandmainstreet.org).

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