

DOWNTOWN SPARKLES WITH HOLIDAZZLE

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Ryan Silvola/Beloit Daily News Joan Siekierski, Bagels & More co-owner, helps decorate Jayce Bauman's cookie. Siekierski was drawing a frosted Christmas tree for Bauman.

BELOIT - Downtown Beloit came alive with holiday spirit with the 14th annual Holidazzle on Friday night.

More than 25 businesses stayed open late to entertain residents of all ages and the festive holiday sounds and smells brought crowds of people to explore what the downtown area had to offer. Those willing to visit each location could fill out a passport and be entered to win a prize. Attendees could look forward to special deals and attractions at each location.

The event was hosted by the Downtown Beloit Association (DBA). Shauna El-Amin, DBA executive director, said Holidazzle is a great shopping event to kick off the holiday season downtown.

"It encourages people to shop local and buy one of a kind gifts our downtown stores offer," El-Amin said. "It really supports their businesses and livelihoods. Without (business owners) we wouldn't have the great downtown that we have."

She said there's always something new to look forward to every year, including new patrons and businesses.

One of the many staples Holidazzle has to offer is gourmet sugar cookie decorating at Bagels & More. Erin Haun, of Rockton, was on her way to see Santa Claus at the Turtle Creek Bookstore, when she and her daughters Adelynn, 8, and Ashlynn, 6, decided to stop into the restaurant to make some cookies.

"We love Holidazzle," Erin Haun said. "We look forward to it every year."

Greg Wallendal, of Beloit, has brought his family out to almost every single Holidazzle. He said it's his one of his family's favorite events of the year.

"You get to nose around in places you wouldn't normally go and run into people you otherwise wouldn't normally see," Wallendal said.

He said it's always great to bump into old friends while also meeting new residents.

Joan Siekierski, Bagels & More co-owner, said running the gourmet cookie decorating station is pretty entertaining.

"We get a lot of people who come back every year, like the Wallendals," she said.

Everyone from age 1-99 years old is welcome to make a cookie, Siekierski joked.

"(Holidazzle) is a great community event," she said. "It's a time to have fun and get festive."

Though a senior at Beloit College, Elise Daugherty said Friday was her first time coming out to Holidazzle. Daugherty spent the evening browsing for clothes and other items in stores like Chic & Unique Clothing Store and Boutique.

While traveling from store to store, residents could listen to the Beloit Memorial High School choir perform Christmas carols.

Later in the evening, patrons could stop in at Suds O'Hanahan's Irish Pub to have a drink and listen to some bagpipers. Members of the South Beloit Lions Club were serving to raise funds for charity.

Holidazzle had loads of attractions to keep crowds entertained through the evening.