

Songs, sugar cookies featured at Holidayz

By Hillary Gavan hgavan@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, December 14, 2013
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Songs, sugar cookies, sparkling lights and Santa Claus filled the Downtown Beloit Association's Holidayz 2013 with holiday cheer on Friday evening.

With slightly warmer temperatures, the event attracted even more holiday fans than ever. More than 30 shops, restaurants, businesses and other institutions in the downtown area played host to artists, musicians, crafters and other vendors. Artists said they loved the opportunity to share their unique wares, and visitors said they enjoyed reconnecting with family and friends. And in between trips to the bedazzled businesses, visitors hopped on trolleys and listened to carolers treat them to live music.

At Bagels & More, mom Elizabeth Hough, her son Ethan, 6, her mother-in-law and parents were enjoying Holidayz for the very first time as they decorated cookies under the tutelage of Joan and Eric Siekierski.

"It's the holidays. Sugar is allowed and expected," Hough said.

Joan Siekierski said the cookie decorating has always a big hit at Holidayz, attracting young children and 80-year-olds alike.

"We made 150 cookies, and they will run out," Joan Siekierski said.

After little Ethan heaped an inch of frosting on his cookie, he performed some break dancing moves for the crowd. And his mom said she liked the chance to get together with family at Beloit's Holidayz.

"I'm loving it so far. I love that the businesses are open and using their space with artists. It's a great partnership," she said.

Rebecca Wallendal brought her little tots, Esther, 5, and Jacob, 1, to decorate cookies and to listen to the Beloit Memorial High School Concert Choir perform at the Hendricks Center for the Performing Arts.

"I love seeing everybody and being downtown. I love the music and the food," she said.

Bagels & More was also home to artist Terry Vetrone of South Beloit, who does green woodworking to make spoons, cups, art and other tools out of local tree limbs he finds after storms. And Kay and Randy Blough of Roscoe were selling the unique "hot rock" candles which are made out of shale, slate and sandstone.

At the Turtle Creek Bookstore, Santa and Mrs. Claus, were opening up their laps to children as well as a few adults.

“I just love Christmas. It’s wonderful,” Mrs. Claus said.

Geoff and Gina Rand of Rockton had brought their 11-year-old son, Adam, for a visit with Santa. Still a fan of the Clauses, Adam asked for a camera and a laptop.

His parents said they have been coming to Holidazzle for years.

“I like the community, visiting and seeing friends and having a good time. And we have good weather,” Gina Rand said

Artists and shop keepers also reported a magical evening for marketing their goods. Sheryl Rayner, owner of A Much Better Way, opened her new mom and baby boutique on Friday at 410 E. Grand Ave. In addition to offering wine and cheese to visitors, the new store hosted artist Sonia La Vigne, who was selling her Chompy Chic Jewelry for moms whose babies like to munch on their jewelry.

La Vigne said she just launched her unique jewelry line six weeks ago and was glad to be at Holidazzle for the first time.

“I just moved here and I was excited to learn about it,” La Vigne said.