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FEATURED

## Holidazzle attracts shoppers downtown

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer  
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(From left, front) Jeremy and Heather Olmstead walk with Liam Flanagan and their daughter Grace Olmstead Friday evening. They were headed to get hot chocolate at Blue Collar Coffee Co. and were taking lots of phone  
Hillary Gavan



BELOIT — The 17th Annual Holidazzle might not have had its trademark trolley rides and vendors in shops this year, but visitors said they loved seeing the lights, strolling the downtown in nice weather and having the chance to get a little extra holiday shopping done.

Nineteen businesses participated in the Friday evening event, according to Downtown Beloit Association (DBA) Executive Director Shauna El-Amin.

El-Amin and DBA Promotions Coordinator Crystal Cribbs were busy in their new offices at 527 E. Grand Ave., unveiling their new historical timeline of downtown Beloit done in conjunction with the Beloit Historical Society featuring 22 photos of historic Beloit on their wall.

They were also collecting receipts from shoppers to be entered into a drawing for 10 \$100 gift cards and a one-night stay at Hotel Goodwin or Ironworks Hotel.

El-Amin said attendance was a bit lower than typical years due to the people being cautious about the pandemic. The event even attracted some shoppers beginning as early as 1 p.m. who wanted to beat the shopping rush in addition to lots of restaurant traffic.

“People are happy the stores are able to be open late for their shopping needs as a lot of people work during the day,” El-Amin said.

While the event didn’t have food or other festivities inside businesses, Christmas music and cheer abounded.

“It gets you in the mood,” said Nine Bells & Cat Tails owner Karen Koyama.



Koyama had special sales going and some new visitors to her metaphysical shop. It was her first Holidazzle at her new location. She said the event included lots of safety precautions and was a great way to help small local shops.

Down the hall from Koyama's business at Creekside Music Academy, 421 E. Grand Ave., percussionist Brianna Trainor was playing the Mbira, a percussion instrument from Zimbabwe. Played by plucking, the instrument makes a signature buzz sound.

"It's a very sacred instrument," she said.

Trainor, who moved to Beloit in August, said it was her first Holidazzle and she was glad she could share her music.

"Everyone's seen drums, but no one's seen the Mbira," she said.

Mom Heather Olmstead was snapping pictures of her daughter Grace Olmstead and her boyfriend Liam Flanagan in the First National Bank Plaza as husband Jeremy Olmstead looked on.

"We come every year. We like the lights. It's so beautiful downtown, and it's a nice night for it this year," Heather Olmstead said.

"I like to get pictures and Blue Collar Coffee hot cocoa," said Grace Olmstead.

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