

DOWNTOWN FREEPORT IN THE LOOP



November/December 2021



2021 SCHEDULE:

It's not Competition, it's Contrast

It is hard to believe that the holidays are here. Thanksgiving is in one week and Christmas is a month away. As everyone gears up for holiday shopping, there are steps, suggested by the US Chamber of Commerce, that small local stores can take to stake their claim to some of the holiday sales this year.

Pay Attention to What the National Retailers Are Doing. This is easy to do because they start their holiday promotions around Labor Day. The point here is to look for ways to stand out against the larger retailers, either by understanding and gearing their strategies to the local audience or by being different and finding a niche they aren't serving.

Come Up with a Promotional Plan. Often what differentiates large and small retailers is their marketing. We are not suggesting that small retailers try to match the big boxes dollar for dollar but be strategic and deliberate with how you market yourself. Play up what makes you a better option than your competition.

Consider Offering Steep Discounts. The holidays are one of the few times of the year people are willing to break their routines and visit new stores. Discounts, especially on one or two items, give you something to promote and a great way to attract new customers.

Pay Attention to Your Systems. Review your point of sale (POS) system, check and replenish your inventory and make sure your staffing is where you need it BEFORE the holidays hit, especially this year! This year, more than in the past, these things are more important and more difficult to master. Pay attention to them now so they won't be an issue when you need them most!

Keep It Simple! You will not be able to do everything so choose to do one or two things exceptionally well. That will be enough for you to attract new customers and, with luck, have a fantastic holiday season of sales!

As always, the Partnership is here to help as a sounding board for your ideas and your marketing partner in reaching local and regional shoppers.

ALL MEETINGS FOR DECEMBER POSTPONED. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Downtown Design & Placemaking
(formerly known as Beautification)

- January 11, 7:30 AM
@ Greater Freeport Partnership

Downtown Business & Building Owners

- January 12, 7:30 AM
@ LOOKING FOR HOST

Downtown Promotions Meeting

- January 13, 8 AM
@ Greater Freeport Partnership

Upcoming Events:

- November 18
Business After Hours
Hughes Resources, 5-7 pm
- November 20-21
Mistletoe Walk
- November 21
Hero Tree Lighting @ Noon
Bus around Downtown 12-4
- November 27
Small Business Saturday

Other News & Holiday Reminders

Neverly Brothers Fundraising

Concert:

Thank you to everyone who supported the Neverly Brothers Concert at the Masonic Ballroom on November 6. It was a wonderful time filled with music, dancing and support for our downtown. Through the efforts of Cal Wescott, Kelly Chesney and Brooke Deininger we were able to successfully raise over \$1,300 for downtown marketing and beautification.

Holiday Window Decorating Competition

The Partnership is hosting the annual holiday window decorating contest for all downtown businesses again this year. Please have your window decorated and ready to judge by 9 am on Wednesday, November 17 to participate. Anonymous judges will be coming around to look at windows Wednesday-Friday. If you would like to be included in the window decorating contest, please let Katie know by Wednesday so she can include you on the judges' sheets.

Hero Tree Decorated Bulbs

The Hero Tree will again be placed in front of the Stephenson County Courthouse on Saturday, November 13 with the official tree lighting on Sunday, November 21 during Mistletoe Walk. It will be decorated with a hero theme and the community is encouraged to decorate and drop off their bulbs featuring their heroes. If asked by community members, please direct them to contact the Partnership office to pick up their clear, plastic ornament for decorating by calling 815-233-1350 or stop in the office.

FHN Festival of Trees

FHN is hosting their tree lighting on November 21 at 5 pm in front of the hospital and will be placing trees in the Freeport Public Library for voting on November 29. Trees in the library are decorated by local non-profits and voted on by visitors for prizes. The seasonal celebration continues with family movies at the Lindo Theatre every Saturday morning at 10 am for a discounted admission. The Festival of Trees at the library as well as the Saturday Holiday Movie Series bring more people to downtown. Please be ready to welcome these visitors and shoppers as they are out and about.

Salvation Army Bell Ringing

The Freeport Salvation Army continues to look for bell ringers to support its annual holiday campaign. There are numerous opportunities and shifts available if you are able to volunteer your time for this great cause. Please contact Bill Clow or the Salvation Army to help fill these slots. Thank you for your support of this great cause!

Holiday Shopping Promotions Schedule

The Downtown Promotions Committee has provided feedback on advertising spending for Mistletoe Walk and the rest of the holiday shopping season. "Open Late Thursdays" has been promoted on the digital billboard above Higher Grounds and is also featured on signs in front of the Partnership office, Mahoney lot at Stephenson and Galena and in front of the visitor center. Mistletoe Walk is being advertised on social media supported by boosted advertising for a 30 mile radius and frequent messaging on local radio. Several service groups have also asked for programs in December regarding downtown shopping and supporting local businesses for the holiday season. General holiday shopping promotions include two billboards (one on each side of Freeport) and extra distribution of holiday rack cards. The committee had great ideas for new distribution locations as well as providing sticky notes to local restaurants who provide deliveries to reach more customers. Please continue to share on social media and help cross-promote our great shopping experience!

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