

5 Reasons AHA! is Great



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There may be a number of reasons why you haven't gotten to experience AHA! New Bedford yet. Your excuses may vary from very practical (such as, I work Thursday nights) to very lame (such as, it's not my scene). If you're worried about not enjoying AHA!, I can assure you that it has something for people of all ages, dispositions, and budgets.

For those of you who don't already know, here's a little background on AHA!, which stands for Arts, History and Architecture. AHA! was started in July of 1999, and has taken place on every second Thursday of the month since. AHA! is dedicated to creating free cultural events for locals to join in, and it pulls in local restaurants and businesses in the effort to offer exciting opportunities each month. AHA! not only highlights the unique culture of New Bedford and its rich history, it also contributes to stimulating the City's Creative Economy initiatives.

Each month, AHA! focuses on a different theme. For example, April's focus was on Sustainability and included an Earth Day celebration parade at Custom Square. For more details on the sort of events that AHA! features, or to see their schedule for next month, go to www.ahanewbedford.org. You will also find that the New Bedford Guide regularly reports on some of the highlights you can hope to see at the upcoming AHA! night. For this article however, I am going to give you 5 general reasons that make AHA! great, and why you should visit AHA! this evening.

1. Music

Music is a central aspect of AHA! and can be found just about anywhere you go. For those who are into the bar scene, you are sure to find some great bands at Pour Farm Tavern, Rose Alley Ale House, Cork or No Problemos most weeks. If you aren't a big fan of bars, or if you're too young,



no worries! There are often featured performers and an open mic at Cafe Arpeggio, and the First Unitarian Church was featuring organ music. The J. Kelley Band acoustic show was at Celtic Coffee House from 6-7:30pm.

The music styles vary; I have had the pleasure of hearing some great jazz music at AHA! as well as some very talented rock and blues bands, and even local choruses. If you're planning out your AHA! night and hope to take in some music, go check out the site and see who is playing where.

2. Food

It almost goes without saying, but Downtown New Bedford has some great restaurants. If you're going to be out for AHA!, you might as well plan to grab dinner. No matter what budget you are on, you are likely to find something to suit your taste. No Problemo's has great Mexican food at an affordable cost, and Rose Alley Ale House is one of the best places around for wings. Pour Farm Tavern also has quite a tasty menu out now. However, if you're looking for something unique and have a bit more money to spend, try out Cork, which is a tapas bar, or Pier 37 which has a one-of-a-kind menu that blends southern cuisine with south coast.

3. Unique Events

If you're tired of doing the same old thing, AHA! offers some one-of-a-kind experiences that you aren't likely to soon forget. For kids there is always some sort of art or craft project to engage in, or even a science event. For example, this past AHA! featured SEEAL's 5th Annual Shrink Your Footprint Fair, which was held at the Ocean Explorium and brought together vendors, non-profits, and others to host demonstrations on sustainability.



Of course, I would be remiss not to mention the prevalence of visual art throughout every AHA! night. There are numerous galleries downtown that open their doors to AHA! and often host special events. On an evening when there is good weather, New Bedford is art lovers dream as you can follow the walking map from gallery to gallery.

If you are like me and have a group of friends who are always looking for something new to do, AHA! offers a lot of other very unique (and very free) events to consider. In March the theme was "Hear Me Roar" and focused on women's history and empowering women. I got to watch roller derby girls demonstrate in the middle of the street, and I ended up participating in an all-girl arm wrestling competition at Rose Alley Ale House (which I did not win). Needless to say my friends and I were talking about what a great time we had for quite a while!

4. AHA! After Hours

AHA! After Hours starts at 9pm, when the other AHA! events come to an end. AHA! After Hours is usually the best time to catch bands playing at the various bars. This past AHA! I went to Pour Farm Tavern for After Hours and heard the Neil McCarthy Problem jam out, and I also got to sample some

delicious microbrews. In my opinion, AHA! After Hours is mainly a perfect opportunity to bar hop with friends since there are always a lot of people out enjoying themselves.

5. Community

The community aspect of AHA! is my favorite part. I feel like these days it's hard to connect with the community because there are so few events that bring people together (besides shopping at Market Basket of course). But AHA! brings a diverse crowd together to engage in fun and informative activities. Every time I go to AHA! I run into someone I know, but even more importantly, I meet new people as well.



This past AHA! was called "Sustainable SouthCoast" and as previously mentioned, it kicked off with really cool "people powered" parade. The parade featured floats that were carried or pulled by UMass students, and students from New Bedford schools who had partnered together. There were many unique costumes and memorable creations, all of which promoted sustainability and keeping the Earth clean. There were many organizations that also walked in the parade to show their unity with the cause, and there was even two marching bands. Additionally, the parade was kicked off by awarding "Mother Earth" and "Father Sea" to two members of the community who have taken great efforts in fighting for environmental causes in the area. This year's "Father Sea" was none other than former Mayor Scott Lang, and the parade start was announced by current Mayor Jon Mitchell. Seeing residents from all over the SouthCoast pull together for such a fun and important purpose was great, and members of the community had lined the streets. This sort of quality community building is what truly makes AHA! great.

Photos from April's AHA!











