

UMass Dartmouth, AHA!, and the City of New Bedford to host outdoor holiday event downtown

On Saturday, December 12 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., UMass Dartmouth, AHA!, and the City of New Bedford will SPARKLE. This outdoor festival allows the community to engage in the spirit of the holidays while staying safe through social distancing.

SPARKLE will focus on the UMass Dartmouth College of Visual & Performing Arts (CVPA) Star Store and connect other downtown organizations and businesses to create a fun atmosphere while supporting downtown stores and restaurants. SPARKLE will officially begin with AHA! Night on Thursday, December 10, 5-8 p.m. This virtual event will celebrate the arts and culture of New Bedford with music, art exhibits, and discussions with local artists.

Saturday's events will be staged on Purchase Street, where the block between Spring Street and Union Street will be closed, and in front of the Star Store. Programming is designed to enhance social distancing and will be conducted per all regulations governing outside activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

December 12 events include:

- A diverse program of entertainment will be staged in the performance tent and the Swain Gallery in the Star Store at the corner of Union St. and Purchase St. and rechristened the City Stage. Performances in the Star Store will be visible through the gallery's windows and the sound broadcast through speakers on the sidewalks outside.

- The Star Store windows will be decorated for the holidays and will offer greetings from the UMassD colleges and schools to the community.
- CVPA students and downtown businesses will offer window decorations as part of downtown New Bedford's "Deck the Windows" projects.
- A variety of performing artists and organizations, including the Department of Music at CVPA, the New Bedford Symphony, Festival Ballet of Providence, the Zeiterion, Your Theatre, Seaglass Musical Theatre, 3rd EyE, The Groovalottos, and UNCG alumna and fado singer Candida Rose will perform.
- Santa Claus, in an antique fire truck, will ride through downtown New Bedford to wave to children.
- Two special North Pole mailboxes will be in front of the Star Store from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the National Park Visitors Center until 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 12 to allow children to drop off letters to Santa. Santa's elves, with the help of Bishop Stang's senior class, will make sure every letter with a return address is answered.

For more information, visit <https://www.umassd.edu/cvpa/sparkle/>. Please note, the schedule of events is subject to change without notice.