

"Like a Hallmark Movie": Gillespie to Host 2nd Holiday Sparkle Event Through Town

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GILLESPIE - On Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023, Gillespie will host their second annual Holiday Sparkle event, complete with over 70 vendors, a train through town and a lighted parade.

Organizers noted that last year's first Holiday Sparkle was a huge success, and they hope to recreate that experience on Saturday. The Holiday Sparkle will invite community members to come out for a full day of festivities.

“It’s just a downtown Christmas event, kind of like a little Hallmark movie,” said organizer Tammy Beechler. “Everybody’s getting involved and it’s just nice to see these little small towns kind of bringing something back to life a little bit.”

Beechler is one of six volunteers who started planning the Holiday Sparkle in August. She explained that businesses along Main Street will remain open all day to host vendors and special events until the lighted parade begins at 4:30 p.m.

From 9 a.m. to noon, kids can meet Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Gillespie Civic Center, check out a petting zoo at Lumpy’s Bar & Grill and enjoy a craft. There will also be “Christmas characters frolicking” and “spontaneous live music performances” along Main Street from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Families can check out face painting and a Christmas movie at the Civic Center, and they can stop by the Gillespie Library for a storytime from 10–11 a.m. A Santa Stampede 5K will start at 3 p.m.

The Sparkle Express train will offer free rides throughout town all day. The craft vendors will be available until 3 p.m. inside of local businesses. The outdoor food vendors will stay open until 5 p.m. along Main Street. Organizers are also giving away 40 free hams to people who register at hotspots throughout town.

“It really has taken off, and it isn’t what we ever expected it to be, but we couldn’t be happier with it,” Beechler said. “We did not expect the crowd that we had here last year. The entire day went by so fast and it was so fun. Everybody had so much fun just going in and out of the stores and seeing the kids run up and down Main Street...It was not anything we ever imagined. It was perfect.”

The Holiday Sparkle is a revitalized tradition from over ten years ago, when Gillespie used to have a downtown Christmas event. The organizers have restarted and revamped the event to be bigger than before. They hope the tradition will continue for many years.

“It is a lot of work, but it’s fun and we get a lot of support from the community, a lot of support from other businesses here in town. It’s very rewarding to see everybody coming out, everybody looking forward to it,” Beechler added. “We couldn’t do it without the support of the community...We’re very fortunate and we’re very thankful that the community is involved like they are.”

You can visit the [official ChristmasInGillespie.com website](https://www.ChristmasInGillespie.com) for more information, including a full schedule and a list of vendor locations and ham hotspots.