The City of SAN DIEGO
Mayor Todd Gloria

News Release

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December Nights Returns to Balboa Park with Headliner Clay Aiken

BELOVED SAN DIEGO TRADITION WELCOMES THE AMERICAN IDOL ICON IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL MEDIA SAN DIEGO

SAN DIEGO – December Nights returns to Balboa Park the first weekend in December for its 49th year, bringing two days of fun and merriment to California's largest free holiday festival. This beloved San Diego tradition will once again feature live entertainment, cultural performances, dazzling lights, festive food and family-friendly activities, with platinum-selling recording artist and *American Idol* star Clay Aiken headlining this year's celebration.

Known for his powerful vocals and engaging stage presence, Aiken will perform a special holiday set featuring beloved Christmas classics alongside music from his latest album, *Rewind*. His appearance, presented in partnership with Local Media San Diego (91X, Z90 and Magic 92.5), promises to be a highlight of the weekend's festivities.

Clay Aiken will perform live on the Organ Pavilion stage on Saturday, Dec. 5, at 7:25 p.m.

During December Nights, Balboa Park will transform into a winter-inspired wonderland featuring more than 1,600 performers in 70 performance groups across five entertainment stages. More than 200 food and retail booths will offer delicious flavors and goodies for sale, and cherished Balboa Park museums will be open to the public for free during the evening hours.

December Nights will be held Friday, Dec. 4, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., and Saturday, Dec. 5, from noon to 10 p.m. Attracting an estimated 350,000 over two days, the event has become the largest free holiday festival in California. It has welcomed millions to Balboa Park over the years.

Visitors are encouraged to use the free December Nights shuttle service to avoid traffic and limited parking in Balboa Park.

"December Nights represents the best of San Diego – a community that comes together to celebrate our diversity, share our traditions and create experiences everyone can enjoy," said

Mayor Todd Gloria. **“For nearly 50 years, this event has been made possible through the partnership of our City employees, local businesses, cultural institutions, public-private partnerships and community organizations. Together, we're able to welcome hundreds of thousands of people to Balboa Park for a free celebration that might otherwise be out of reach for many families. It's a reminder of what we can accomplish when we work together to make San Diego a place where everyone belongs.”**

The holiday festival will kick off Friday, Dec. 4, at 4 p.m., with the annual tree lighting ceremony at 6 p.m. on the Spreckels Organ Pavilion stage. The ceremony will be led by City Council President Joe LaCava, as well as emcees from KUSI News and FOX 5 San Diego and the City’s leadership team.

“December Nights is a beloved San Diego tradition, and it is a unique opportunity for all of us to come together to kick off the holiday season,” said Council President LaCava. **“I want to thank the dedicated City employees, cultural organizations, vendors, sponsors, and every San Diegan who helps make this celebration possible year after year.”**

Keeping with tradition, visitors can enjoy global cuisine as the House of Pacific Relations International Cottages open their doors, allowing them to explore the cultures and foods they represent.

Families with children of all ages will find lots of reasons to explore the Family Zone including:

- Free Ferris wheel rides and a holiday light show display on the Museum of Art facade, thanks to San Diego Community Power.
- Activities for children and families provided by Disneyland.
- Free DIY holiday art projects, sponsored by Home Depot.
- Food Truck Alley located at Village Place.
- Hundreds of local artists, cultural performers and live entertainment on five entertainment stages located throughout Balboa Park.
- Half-pipe skateboarding demos in the Palisades Plaza provided by Bones Love Milk.
- Visits and photos with Santa, games, activities and more.

December Nights is made possible through the generous support of our community partners, whose collaboration and dedication help bring this celebration to life each year.

Free shuttles will operate from City College (16th Avenue and B Street), Downtown (3rd Avenue and A Street), and Little Italy (Beech Street and Kettner Boulevard) with drop-off and pick-up at Sixth Avenue and Laurel Street in Balboa Park.

Free parking is also available on a first-come, first-served basis at City College parking garages, which are served by the free shuttle. Paid parking options are also available in and around Balboa Park, with

advance purchase recommended for select lots. In addition, the San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) will offer bus rides between the City College transit hub and the event. There is limited parking at December Nights, and it is highly recommended that visitors consider other transportation options.

With support from Republic Services and SANDAG, this event reflects the City of San Diego's commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility. Together, we're encouraging conscious holiday choices for December Nights and throughout the holiday season by asking guests to properly sort and recycle food and trash, and to take public transit to the event or to ride-share. Guests can also take advantage of one of two free bike valets sponsored by SANDAG, one at the west entrance of the Laurel Street bridge and another at the east side of Village Place near the San Diego Natural History Museum parking lot.

Visitors to December Nights also have an opportunity to support their neighbors during the holiday season. San Diego Gas & Electric is partnering with Jewish Family Service to collect socks and underwear for individuals staying at the City's Safe Parking lots.

"As we celebrate the 49th year of December Nights, this event remains one of the biggest holiday festivals on the West Coast," said Christina Chadwick, Executive Director for the City's Special Events and Filming Office. **"Our team has worked thoughtfully to honor the traditions San Diegans cherish while introducing new experiences that ensure there's something special for everyone to enjoy."**

Safety at December Nights is a priority. The San Diego Police Department offers the following tips to provide visitors with an enjoyable and safe experience:

- Drones are prohibited.
- Keep valuables and cellphones in front pockets.
- Never leave bags or purses unattended.
- Keep children nearby and within sight.
- Be aware of your surroundings. If you see something, say something. To report any suspicious activity, call 9-1-1 immediately.

The San Diego Police and Fire-Rescue departments will have recruiting teams on site to meet potential applicants and share information about joining their teams.

Please, leave your pets at home. The event welcomes those who require a trained service animal to assist. For animals not specifically trained to work in crowded and unpredictable environments, you will be putting your pet in a potentially hazardous and frightening situation. Therefore, visitors are strongly encouraged not to bring pets to the event.

KUSI News, FOX 5 San Diego AND Local Media San Diego are official media partners for the event. Local Media San Diego (91X, Z90 and Magic 92.5) will have booths with DJ interaction and fun giveaways. XEWT

will also have a booth with a prize wheel and giveaways.

To view a full schedule of attractions and entertainment, along with maps and parking information, visit DecemberNights.org.



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