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# The Magnificent Mile®

NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE • CHICAGO USA

## **CELEBRATING 18 YEARS OF HOLIDAY MAGIC FUN FACTS ABOUT THE MAGNIFICENT MILE LIGHTS FESTIVAL® PRESENTED BY HARRIS**

- This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the lighting of the trees along North Michigan Avenue, which was the first street in the world to adopt this annual holiday tradition in 1959.
- Prior to the full street lighting in 1959, The Greater North Michigan Avenue Association (GNMAA) celebrated the start of the holiday season with an annual installation of a large star on the façade of the historic Water Tower. Each year celebrities were invited to throw the switch and illuminate the star.
- Today, The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival procession is highlighted by the illumination of one million lights on 200 trees along North Michigan Avenue.
- Celebrities involved throughout the years in lighting up The Magnificent Mile® for the holidays include Carmen Miranda, Betty Grable, Geraldine Page, Jerry Lewis, Jamie Farr, Kirk Cameron, Sherri Shepard from *The View*, Robin Roberts of *Good Morning America*, KT Tunstall, Sister Hazel, Corbin Bleu, Jason Mraz, and a host of beloved Disney characters.
- The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival as we know it today made its debut on November 21, 1992 with a procession of horse-drawn carriages that traveled from Oak Street to the Chicago River. Jamie Farr, best known for his role in the television series MASH was the celebrity Grand Marshall.
- The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival draws approximately one million spectators annually from around the country.
- The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival takes 12 months to plan with the help of 800 volunteers.

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- Over the years, The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival has drawn many whimsical attractions including an ice sculpture made from 4,000 lbs of ice by the InterContinental Chicago, a 500 lb cheesecake standing four and one-half feet tall created by Eli's and a life-sized Santa in his sleigh made from LEGO and Duplo bricks.
- The custom holiday-themed balloons that will join the procession in 2009 require up to 94 handlers who have to be trained at a special balloon school.
- The sleigh vehicle used for Santa's arrival in the procession in 2008 was made for the 1994 movie version of *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*.
- The Magnificent Mile Lights Festival presented by Harris culminates with a spectacular fireworks display at the gateway to The Magnificent Mile at Michigan Avenue and the Chicago River, using more than 10,000 handmade fireworks shells, courtesy of Lumina, Inc., a Chicago-based, family-owned company.

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