



## A Letter from the Chair of The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival® Grace Kuklinski Rappe

Even after nearly three weeks, the glow from The Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival hasn't faded. It's still with me, etched on my smile and staring at me from my sweater drawer.

The numbers are in, and the Lights Fest committee and I are thrilled to share some incredible results from the event. The energy of the bands, the crowd, and the floats electrifying Michigan Avenue was palpable and translated into a crowd of incredible size, generating record revenue for the district.

We're thrilled to unveil some electrifying results from the November 18th Wintrust Magnificent Mile Lights Festival, including:

- A sea of nearly 800,000 cheered from Michigan Avenue as Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse from Walt Disney World® Resort illuminated The Avenue with a million twinkling lights.
- Attendees of Lights Festival Lane doubled from 2022, with over 38K people enjoying photos with Santa (courtesy of Wintrust), The Noggeler from Lucerne, Switzerland, complimentary coffee in holiday flavors from Dunkin', and much more.
- The digital world lit up with Lights Fest fervor! Our website saw a strong 251,000 pageviews of Lights Fest content, while over 68,000 enthusiastic souls clicked "interested" on our Facebook event. It's clear: the online world was eager to celebrate!
- Our guide was so popular that it was downloaded over 22,000 times! And it wasn't just downloaded, it was used! We heard from one member who said that they saw a 45% increase in restaurant revenue on the day of the Lights Festival.
- The event ignited an economic spark, generating a staggering \$31.7 million in revenue for the District—a stunning 28% increase over our previous record set in 2019! This remarkable achievement underscores the extraordinary power of the Lights Festival to drive growth and prosperity for our community.
- Plus, we fueled the local economy, supporting over 17,300 jobs. These employees showcased their talents and passions, creating a welcoming District for all.
- We generated a record-breaking \$3.1 million in local city and state tax revenue. That means more resources for vital services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. It's a win-win: holiday magic and a stronger community.
- And yes, we did set a record for the number of sweaters at a parade at 3,948. We can't wait to break that record next year!

We are also happy to report that the halo effect of Lights Fest has continued even after the festivities ended. Since November 18th, foot traffic on The Magnificent Mile has experienced a 7% increase compared to last year.

A big congratulations and thank you for the success of the day goes out to the Chicago Police Department for their unwavering dedication. We'd also like to thank the Sheriff's Department and all

collaborating law enforcement agencies for their tireless efforts, in addition to the support of so many city agencies. All ensured hundreds of thousands of hearts danced with holiday cheer, worry-free.

And let's not forget the sparkling stars who made it all possible: our title sponsor, Wintrust! Thanks to their generosity, everyone enjoyed the magic of the day for free.

But the applause doesn't stop there. We're showering love on Dunkin', AT&T, and Enjoy Illinois for their incredible support. They fueled the festivities and sweetened the experience for everyone involved.

Together, as a city, we orchestrated a symphony of holiday joy and tangible business impact. Thank you for all of your support.

In closing, I wanted to share a few of my favorite moments from the day. Enjoy!

Fondly,

Grace Kuklinski Rappe

