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# Seaport Village's 'Coastal Christmas'

highlights good cheer and charitable giving in San Diego

December 6, 2019 in Features, Top Story  0





Loren Smith (aka Surfin' Santa) posing with some 'reindeer.' (Photo courtesy Seaport Village)

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SHARES

By VICTORIA DAVIS | Downtown News

There are three things 66-year-old Loren Smith is an expert at: plucking the bass, strumming his guitar, and playing the best vacationing Santa on the West Coast. Smith, a long-time San Diego resident, has been Seaport Village's white-bearded, Hawaiian shirt-wearing, board shorts-sporting "Surfin' Santa" for the last 14 years, attracting thousands of people at a time to Holidays at Seaport Village each December.

"This is probably the hardest job that I do every year because of going up and down on a surfboard for 200 pictures," said Smith, who has also played Santa for SeaWorld San Diego and the San Diego Zoo. "But making those kids smile is wonderful and the event itself is always remarkably successful and fun."

"He's the original San Diego Santa Clause," added Scott Andrews, the event's marketing director.

Holidays at Seaport Village takes place throughout the month of December, having kicked off last weekend with Smith arriving at the village on watercraft Saturday, Nov. 30, for his signature Surfin' Santa reveal, parade and photo-op session. In 2013, USA Today named Smith's arrival one of the "10 best Santa sightings in America."



Surfin' Santa waves at the crowds in Seaport Village. (Photos courtesy Seaport Village)

"It's always been a popular event," said Smith, who will also be the guest of honor at "Breakfast with Surfin' Santa" at Harbor House Restaurant Saturday, Dec. 14. From 9 to 11 a.m., holiday guests can chow down and take pictures with Smith, get their face painted, enjoy balloon artists and a kids show. Every Saturday in December will also feature Smith's band Jackstraws, also known as the "Surfing Santa Band," who will play Beach Boys-inspired music while fashioning Santa hats and other Christmas attire.

"The crowds are wonderful, and the support is great," added Smith. "Seaport's holiday festivities have always been big and they're getting bigger."

This year will likely be Seaport's largest holiday bash to date, according to Andrews. Holidays at Seaport will be featuring more entertainment than ever before, with their "Holidays by the Bay" partnering with Nomad Artz, to showcasing candy cane stilt walkers and pop-music carolers Saturdays and Sundays from now until Dec. 22nd, as well as a human-sized, beach-themed snow globe with a dancer contortionist inside, featured Dec. 8 and 15. Plus, live music from jazz and orchestral to contemporary will be up for enjoyment everyday by the food courts.

“We’re really excited to bring these creative characters together,” said Nomad Artz Costume and Booking Manager Layla Marcus. “This is a time for families to get together to celebrate the holidays and San Diego culture as well. We don’t get the snow, but we do get the sun and the waves and it gives us an excuse to be outside and just play.”



Loren Smith in a car at the event

But Holidays at Seaport Village is also adopting a philanthropic approach this year, joining forces with Surfrider Foundation San Diego to display Surfrider artist works, like a Christmas tree made entirely out of repurposed trash, to promote sustainability and bring awareness to plastic pollution in the oceans. Seaport Village is also inviting guests to donate new toys at “Santa’s Workshop” (located in front of the Harbor House), which will be gifted to Toys for Tots.

“This is a way we can impact our guests in an active and positive way,” said Andrews. “The holidays are not just about entertainment, it’s also a season for giving.”

Feeding San Diego will also have an ornament-making station near Santa’s Workshop, where families and friends can create angels out of plastic spoons and write encouraging messages to be put in Feeding San Diego food-filled backpacks that go out on Fridays to kids in need of meals.

“It’s a really great opportunity for us to get the message out about the face of hunger in our community,” said Charina Layman from Feeding San Diego. “Especially during times like this,

when we have the threat of wildfires, people fall into need very easily being displaced from their homes and having to make difficult choices.”

While it’s still one of his more taxing jobs, it’s these nonprofit connections and the greater-good focus which has made Surfin’ Santa Smith’s favorite Santa role.

“There’s a unique energy that comes with this particular event,” said Smith. “This event really means a lot to me and I’m proud of what they do. It’s a big reason why playing this Santa character has become so special to me.”

Other Holidays at Seaport Village activities include holiday film screenings by Seaport Cinema, photos with Santa at Santa’s Workshop, San Diego Bay Parade of Lights (Dec. 8 and 15), and a Menorah lighting on Dec. 28. For more information on tickets and times, visit [seaportvillage.com/holidays](https://seaportvillage.com/holidays).

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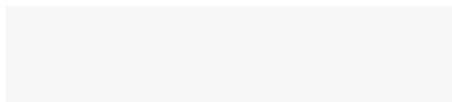
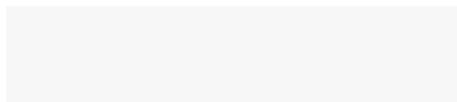


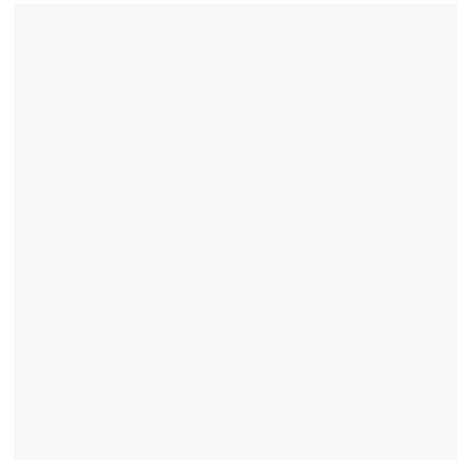
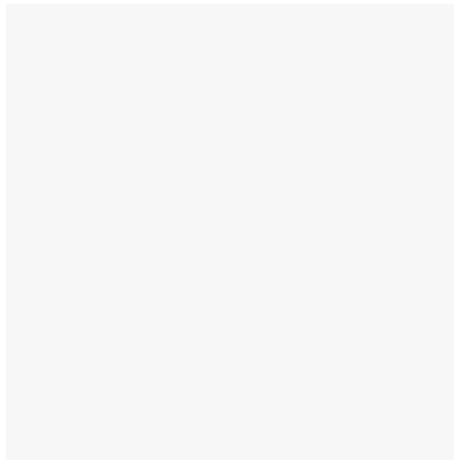
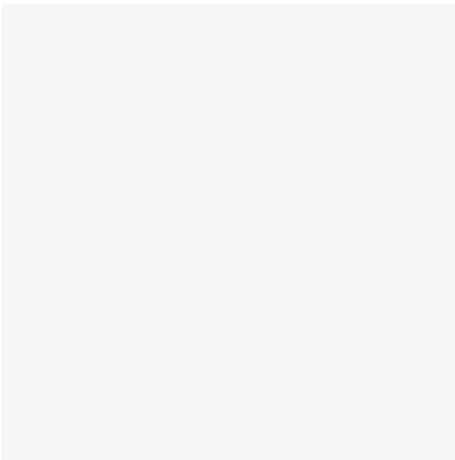
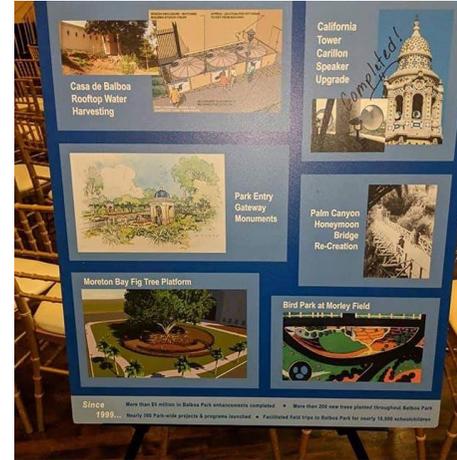
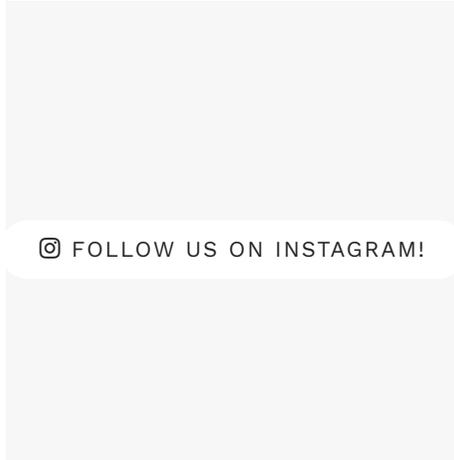
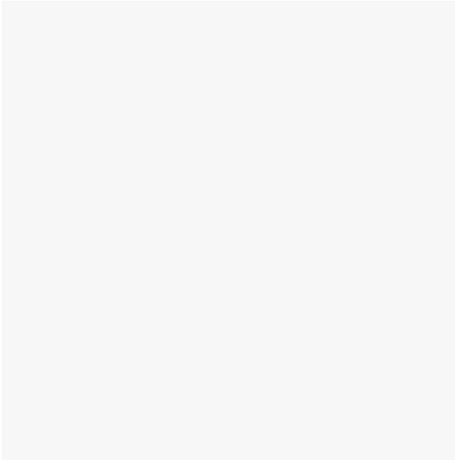
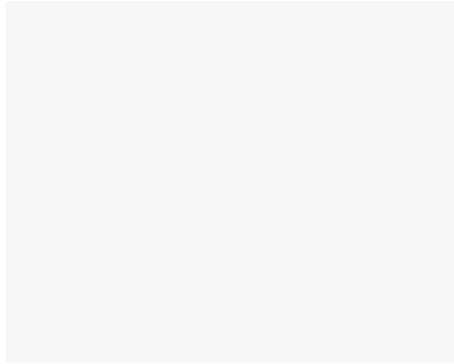
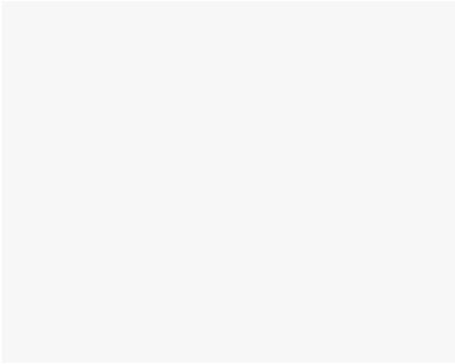
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San Diego Community Newspaper Group



Inside the Children's Museum (Photo courtesy: the new Children's Museum of San Diego)

**The New Children's Museum of San Diego wins national recognition**

By Jill Dunham

The 2019 National Medal for Museum and Library Service by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The award is considered the nation's highest honor given to museums and libraries. In the past 25 years, the accolade has celebrated institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions for individuals, families and communities. The award will be presented at a June 12 event in Washington, D.C.

According to Deputy Museum Director Tamara Korte,

**Successful graffiti artist from San Diego to be featured at Festival of the Arts**

By Cynthia Robertson

San Diego homegrown artist Dave Ross is making graffiti colorful, cute and a treat on film — and for that, he is being featured at the San Diego Festival of the Arts on the weekend of June 8-9. Ross is arguably best known for his creation of Bunsy Kitty, introduced in his 2016 book, "The Origins of Bunsy Kitty: A Tale for All Ages."

It is a story of acceptance, rising to the occasion, and being brave. Ross explained,

"It is a book meant for families and it drives these messages home through characters like Bunsy Kitty and Mommy Bunsie, who are based on my late mother and collaborator," he said.

Ross' mother wrote about the magic spell in the book and helped edit the story after he wrote it. But the manuscript actually sat in Ross' over-pair for over a decade before he finally pushed to get it published, mainly because of his mother's struggle with Alzheimer's.



Grffiti artist David Ross at one of his murals of Bunsy Kitty and other characters he has created. Photo courtesy: David Ross

**DowntownBriefs**



Assembly member Shirley Weber and Senate President Pro Tem Tom Atkins, both representing San Diego, celebrate the passage of AB 392. (Photo courtesy of office of Assembly member Shirley Weber)

**California Assembly passes police use-of-deadly-force bill**

The California state Assembly passed legislation last week authored by San Diego Assembly member Shirley M. Weber and Sacramento Assembly member Kevin McCarthy that would restrict the police use of deadly force statewide. AB 392 moved to the Senate on a 67-0 vote after law enforcement groups expressed opposition and the bill gained the support of California Governor Gavin Newsom, Senate President Pro Tem Tom Atkins and Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon.

"The Assembly vote on AB 392 is proof positive that real change can happen. AB 392 will end preventable deaths and save without jeopardizing the safety of law enforcement officers. It was long, hard work, but I am proud to be part of the effort with Assembly member Shirley Weber, law enforcement, victims' families and others to find a path forward on use of force. I look forward to hearing AB 392 in the Senate," Atkins said in a statement.

"Significant change is never easy, but those who voted today looked to their conscience and found the courage to do the right thing for California," Weber said. "I have to thank the families who have lost loved ones to police violence. They have been the energy

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