

THINGS TO DO

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# Thousands celebrate New Years at Monterey's First Night



A group of children and their instructor play guitars for the crowd. (Kyarra Harris/Monterey Herald)



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MONTEREY >> The weather was chilly, but clear and dry this year for the 32nd annual First Night celebration, bringing thousands to a transformed Downtown Monterey for a night of art and performances.

Thousands of locals and tourists made their way to Alvarado Street Tuesday to celebrate New Year's.

The event brought together students, friends, couples and families, many adorned with festive 2025 necklaces, glasses and streamers. A vendor booth sold small rainbow light-up toys for kids, that lit up the street with color as the night went on.

"My husband and I come almost every year together," said Lisa Josephs from Salinas, who brought her parents visiting from Colorado. "It's a reliable way to bring in the New



A group of dancers, adorned in colorful lights, walk down Alvarado Street as part of the evening parade. (Kyarra Harris/Monterey Herald)

Year in a contained environment and there's plenty of entertainment."

Josephs said she loves seeing families get dressed up in matching outfits and accessories. Her favorite part of the evening is the musical performances.

"It's so cool to see all the kids with their colorful toys, but as far as entertainment goes, the Black Irish Band is something to see," Josephs said.

There were dozens of performances varying from lion dancers, live bands, improv shows and fire dancers.

Guests were able to walk around from venue to venue watching different shows. The festival kicked off with a lot of kid-friendly activities from 3 until 5 p.m. while there was still daylight. Activities included face painting and snowflake making. Then the evening parade, led by several organizations and vendors, proceeded down Alvarado.

"The parade was really nice, once the sun went down you could see everyone's outfits and toys light up," said Johnny Viaz, from Arizona. He said he visits Monterey regularly during the holidays for the coastal view and seafood, but this was his first time at First Night. "You can tell this is a community effort, it's a nice space and it's pretty packed."

Some acts and performances have returned year after year for First Night in a tradition that's lasted decades, but there are new faces each year.

"You know it's funny, I just looked up something to do for New Year's Eve," said Mackenzie Summers, from Pebble Beach. Summers came with her family for the first time. Though the family already had plans to countdown somewhere else, they said First Night would serve as an early celebration and dinner. "The dances have been our favorite so far, we liked seeing the acrobats — they were so young!"



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The lion dancers are a crowd favorite and returning act to First Night. (Kyarra Harris/Monterey Herald)



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