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Malik Yoba and the Apollo Theater were the grand marshals. (Spectrum News NY1)

MANHATTAN

Holiday season kicks off in Harlem with Holiday Lights Parade

BY EMMA BARNETT | MANHATTAN
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What You Need To Know

- The holiday season kicked off in Harlem Tuesday with the Harlem Holiday Lights Parade
- The parade started at 125th Street and Broadway and was free and open to the public
- This year's theme, "Culture, Community and Connections," was highlighted throughout the parade
- Malik Yoba and the Apollo Theater were the grand marshals

"Harlem has that special swag, that special culture, that special confidence, and we all come to 125th Street to light it up," Lew Rice, the co-chair of the public safety committee of the Harlem Business Improvement District, said.

Donald "No" Long, the ringmaster of Universoul Circus, was one of the performers.

"We are all here for the same thing, and that is to have a good time," Long said. "That's contagious. It happens outside, but it comes back inside to the homes as well," he said.

The 125th Street Business Improvement District hosted the Harlem Holiday Lights Parade.

Mukaram Taheraly, the chairman of the 12th Street Business Improvement District, said, "It doesn't matter who you are, welcome to Harlem and just light it up with us."

This year's theme, "Culture, Community and Connections," was highlighted throughout the parade.

"We have community engagement, we have toy drives, we have seniors coming out, we have youth coming out. We have bands on the streets, and there's activation on the whole strip. It's incredible!" Taheraly said.

Senior citizens had their own watch site on 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard called "Seniors on the Boulevard."

her present. “This is beautiful. Thank God for the seniors. This is something that we really, really need. Especially the seniors.”

Karen Dixon, executive director of the Harlem Dowling West Side Center, helped organize “Seniors on the Boulevard.”

“It keeps them connected,” she said. “Many seniors are isolated, even those that may go to a center when they go home. They may not have anyone at home, and technology such as a tablet gives them an opportunity to explore other avenues.”

One of this year’s grand marshals was actor and philanthropist Malik Yoba.

“As a kid who ran up and down these streets, to be here in Harlem knowing that we actually have a holiday parade, which is not something we had when I was a kid. This is major.”

The Apollo Theater was the only institution to be named a grand marshal.

“It’s extraordinary, because we have been in this community since 1934 as a cultural icon,” Billy Mitchell said. “Today’s parade is just the highlight of what we do here in Harlem, highlighting our icons.”

Harlem Holiday Lights has taken place for more than 30 years.

There were more than 20 lit-up floats this year that travelled throughout the neighborhood.