



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 30, 2026

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Exciting Holiday Adventures Begin
*Wild Christmas and Wildbright set to bring unforgettable experiences
to residents and visitors*

In grand fashion, the City of McAllen unveiled “Wild Christmas,” the theme for the 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade, presented by H-E-B and powered by Bert Ogden, along with “Wildbright,” the companion theme for the South Pole Illuminated Festival (SPIF) presented by H-E-B Helping Here.

Inspired by the connection between holiday magic and McAllen’s beautiful green spaces, this year’s celebration invites families to explore a holiday adventure where wildlife, imagination and tradition come together. The announcement follows a record-breaking year for the parade, which welcomed more than 265,000 guests in 2025 and earned its ninth International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA) Best Parade in the World award.

“The magic of the McAllen Holiday Parade comes from the people who make it possible and the families who make it a tradition,” said Mayor Javier Villalobos. “Wild Christmas is a celebration of imagination, community and the natural beauty that surrounds us. We are excited to invite families to experience a holiday season where memories will last for generations.”

Through colorful displays and larger-than-life characters, Wild Christmas will showcase animals from around the world helping Santa prepare for the holiday season.

Guests will spot illuminated floats featuring local birds singing Christmas carols at the Center for Urban Ecology, nocturnal creatures wrapping presents around a Camp McAllen campfire and other magical wildlife scenes. New giant character balloons will also make their debut, along with trompitos featuring unique characters, including an axolotl from Mexico carrying a surprise.

Fan-favorite hosts for the parade were also announced. Three-time Super Bowl Champion for the Dallas Cowboys and legendary No. 88, Michael Irvin, will return as the parade’s English-language host, while Julián Gil returns to host the Spanish-language broadcast.

Be on the lookout for social media games, giveaways, and interactive experiences as the countdown begins. Record engagement in 2025, generated more than 13 million social media impressions across the United States and Mexico.

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This year, in celebration of the Wild Christmas theme, families are invited to make history by nominating their beloved pets for the first-ever Animal Honorary Grand Marshal Search, where one special companion will be named the official 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade Animal Honorary Grand Marshal. Whether they have feathers, fur, scales or hooves, all animals are welcome. Additional details on how to nominate a pet will be announced on social media this August.

The celebration aims to connect with nature and explore the outdoors through activities like hiking, kayaking, camping and discovering green spaces. That magic will continue at the SPIF with Wildbright, where the festival will be transformed into an illuminated wildlife adventure opening November 27 at McAllen Convention Center's Oval Park. Wildbright will feature dazzling light displays, a new 80-foot real ice-skating rink, the Driscoll Electric Parade, family-friendly attractions, fireworks and more.

Tickets for the 2026 McAllen Holiday Parade will go on sale on Friday, July 31 at 10am through August 31 at 10pm with a special buy one, get one free promotion. Tickets for Wildbright at SPIF are also available as part of a summer special, with the first 50 ticket buyers receiving free ice skating passes. Click here on Friday: <https://www.ticketmaster.com/mcallen-holiday-parade-2026-presented-by-mcallen-texas-12-05-2026/event/3A0064FBAD17A969>

The McAllen Holiday Parade is presented by H-E-B and powered by Bert Ogden Auto Group, and proudly sponsored by McAllen International Airport, South Padre Island CVB, Reliant and Lone Star National Bank. Additional sponsors include Budweiser-L&F Distributors, McAllen International Bridge System, McAllen Public Utility, Metro McAllen, McAllen Public Works, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Lone Star Ambulance, Matt's Building Materials, PepsiCo, J. Gonzalez Injury Attorneys, South Texas ISD, South Texas College, McDonald's, Driscoll Children's Hospital, Chick-fil-A Rio Grande Valley, American Electric Power Foundation, McAllen Shines, IBC Bank, Lacks Furniture, Visit McAllen, Hermes, Peña Eye Institute, McAllen ISD, Linebarger Attorneys at Law, PNC Bank, O'Reilly Auto Parts, McAllen Economic Development Corporation, Rhodes Enterprises & Esperanza Homes, Pollux Castor Creative, Explore McAllen, Palenque Group, Halff Associates, B2Z Engineering, Raba Kistner Consultants, Inc., Carollo Engineers, Whataburger, Rodeo Dental & Orthodontics, Dollar Tree, Q7 Sports and SpawGlass.

Visit the McAllen Holiday Parade and South Pole Illuminated Festival social media pages for more information and giveaways.

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About the City of McAllen

Founded in 1904 and incorporated in 1911, the City of McAllen has grown from a small agricultural community into one of the most vibrant and fastest-growing cities along the U.S.–Mexico border. Known as the “City of Palms,” McAllen serves as a hub for international trade, retail, tourism, and culture in the Rio Grande Valley. Today, the city employs more than 2,600 dedicated public servants across 41 departments, delivering essential services to a community of more than 150,000 residents. McAllen city leaders remain committed to transparent governance, fiscal responsibility, and enhancing quality of life through innovation, infrastructure, and community engagement. For more information, visit www.mcallen.net and follow us on social media @cityofmcallen