



Photo by Phoenix Giroux

Firefighters of Belleville were among many community groups handing out treats to children at the Belleville Santa Claus Parade on Nov. 17, while also collecting toys for the Belleville Professional Firefighters Christmas Toy Drive.

Parade kicks off Christmas

By Phoenix Giroux

The holiday season kicked off this weekend with the long-awaited Santa Claus parade.

Families started to scout out spots by 3 p.m., waiting the long hour and a half till the music and lights would brighten the night sky.

The Nov. 17 event bands the community together to get into the holiday spirit. The Santa Claus Parade officially started once the clock struck 4:30. The parade was lively with giants floats cruising down the street and lights that glistened shifting from one

colour to another but never in a uniform pattern.

The music was loud and vast. Some floats had the same songs playing but often you were listening to many different tunes. The lights reflected sparsely through the massive number of bubbles flying through the streets. The bubbles floated towards the crowds on the sidewalks and were welcomed with fascinated hollers.

Throughout the streets happy giggles and little 'merry Christmases' bounced from building to building. Infants to teenagers, college students to seniors, all came together

as a community to get in the holiday spirit. Not a single spirit down, smiles reached far and wide. Children excitedly waited as they saw people giving out candy and stickers, patient to see if they'd be next.

There were more than 70 different floats in the parade. No matter flat beds, cars, feet or paws, the only thing the same in the parade was the holiday cheer, passing through each float and rubbing off on the crowd.

You could hear a clip-clop and children ran to the end of the road waving their letters for Santa. The Pony Express was walking through the parade

taking letters to safely deliver to Santa before it was too late.

From the Pentecostal church, dance teams, the Quinte Humane Society and Loyalist College, the variety of businesses advertising themselves at the parade was endless.

As well as being fun, the event is also used to help people. For example, Gleaners food bank was at the beginning of the parade ready to take in non-perishable food items to help those in need this holiday season. Belleville Professional Firefighters were also present and taking donations of toys as part of a Christmas toy drive.

"Thank you to everyone who came out to support the Santa Claus Parade and supported our Toy Drive. Your generosity and holiday spirit will bring joy to so many local children this season. Together, we're making a real difference in our community. Wishing you and your family a safe and joyous holiday season!" said the Belleville professional Firefighters Christmas Toy Drive, in social media release. The Santa Claus Parade is an event that is looked forward to each year and it's a day to truly come together and celebrate the beginning of the festive season.

Festive lights a special display

By Olivia Harvey

When leaves fall off once abundant trees and cold wind nips at your nose, it's clear that winter is coming and the holidays are just around the corner. On Nov. 15, Belleville kicked off its official holiday season with the return of the annual event the Festival of Lights.

The Festival of Lights started a year after a devastating car crash in December of 1958 that took the lives of two young men, Billy Foster and Art, or more commonly known as Sonny Culloden. The Foster family developed this festival in honour of their son and his friend, hoping that it would bring joy to the young community of Belleville.

Sixty-four years later, the Festival of Lights is still bringing smiles not only to the young people but to all of Belleville. This event has been bringing the community together since it first started in 1959. With development from the Foster family and generous donations from the Cullodens, the festival was able to catch the attention of the city of Belleville, which took over the reins and restored the spirit that was present in the first years of this celebration.

"My favourite part is seeing so many people down here. Community is really nice (but) you don't see a lot of everybody coming together. You know, I just saw people I haven't seen for a few years, so it's nice at events like these to connect and come and see all the holiday spirit," said spectator Vicki Macdonald.

Macdonald has been coming here for the past two years with friends and family, taking walks around the grounds and admiring the colourful displays during the holiday season, but has never come to the opening night.

"I'm very excited to be here for the first big



Photo by Olivia Harvey

Santa Claus is one of many light displays at the Festival of Lights at Jane Forrester Park in Belleville.

revealing of the lights. Usually I come closer to the holidays, but I figured I'd come today," Macdonald added.

The Festival of Lights includes fun activities for families and individuals, with things like live entertainment from Belleville's own

musical talent Andy Forgie, food trucks from Beavertails to The Pink Funnel, and even a guest appearance from Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The light displays have been sponsored and/or donated by many businesses, as well

as private individuals. The lights include colourful moving displays, standstill displays, and a drone light show that had left many guests in awe.

The number of guests that attend the festival keeps growing every year, and with the

addition of new displays, the light display only keeps getting bigger.

This recurring festival might have been created out of sorrow, but it's clear that it brings holiday joy and happiness to the Belleville community.