



THE FLOWER MOUND Messenger

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Flower Mound Welcomes The Holidays

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Staff Writers



Toni Moffitt/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Santa and Mrs. Claus and their special sleigh riders topped-off the popular holiday parade.

The 18th Annual Flower Mound Holiday Parade on Saturday, Dec. 8, stepped out into a balmy, 70-degree, Texas morning.

A perfect day for a parade, the energy began building early as the high school bands warmed up and the parade participants began lining the parade route.

The parade got off without a hitch at 10 a.m. with the CCA donation truck leading the way, collecting canned food items as it passed.

Of course, for all the children in attendance, it was the best day since Halloween — it was “snowing” candy and Santa arrived in Flower Mound.

Parade watchers left the route quickly to travel the short distance to enjoy the Holiday Stroll in Parker Square.

Decorated with more than 300,000 lights and activities that included carriage rides, kids games, arts and crafts and live entertainment, the event continues into the early evening with a tree lighting by Mayor Jody Smith.

"What I like, is what they have here — the games for the kids, the food, the music," said Stroll participant Adriana Guzman of Lewisville. "And what I like is that it's during Christmastime. The way people are with each other. You may not know anybody, but they'll say 'Merry Christmas.' Any other day, I think you would just walk by each other. The difference is because it's the Christmas season."

Guzman's eldest daughter, Karla, was a member of the Dance Workshop dance studio, which performed as part of the live entertainment.

Hundreds came out to the annual Holiday Stroll at Parker Square. The Dec. 8 event is traditionally held on the second Saturday of December to follow the Holiday parade. About 2,000 to 3,000 families usually attend the Stroll, and this year there were about 5,000 in attendance, said Wendy Trayler, property administrator of Parker Square.

Among the crowd were first-timers Vanessa Diaz, her husband, Raul, and their children, Emilly, 8 and Raul, 5.

"We like the decorations and the happiness, seeing the kids enjoying everything. They're innocent and they don't see Christmas like adults," Diaz said. "You see families together, taking pictures and seeing the kids enjoying themselves."

It's like stepping back into time, Guzman said. "I think to some people, Christmas season is stressful. But to me, I feel like a kid again and I relive my childhood," she said. "Especially since I have two girls, I try to make it special ... the Santa Claus thing."

Crowd-goers enjoyed food, drinks from vendors and live entertainment provided by groups like Northview Baptist Church of Lewisville, which performed Christmas carols.

"Music is just really important for the holidays, and I think it's a big part of the holidays, helps bring the Christmas spirit and I look forward to this time of year," singer Carla Gilbreath said. Christmas carols help get the message out about Jesus and his birth, she said.

"People tend to forget that it is about him and a lot of it is commercialized, so we help them to remember what it's all about," Gilbreath said.

The Holiday Stroll, held from 12 noon until 6 p.m., concluded with a fireworks display.

Live Nativity and hayrides add to the celebration

Lamb of God Lutheran Church, which is across Cross Timbers from Parker Square, held its annual live nativity in conjunction with the Holiday Stroll. The church also asked for gifts to benefit the children of Indian Oaks Mission in Oak, Okla. The facility is for children ages 5 to 18 who are either homeless, abused or neglected, said Marilyn Janke, chairwoman of this year's live nativity committee.. She said about 100 gifts were collected for the children.

"Christ is the reason for the season and it's his birth that we celebrate," Janke said.

In the first year the Live Nativity was held, about 50 people attended, Janke said. Six years later in 2006, that number had climbed to 400 and hay rides were added. "We're hoping that they would experience the real reason for Christmas, that they would hear of Christ's birth and that they would see his love being lived out among us," said the Rev. Phil Cook, associate pastor of Lamb of God Lutheran Church.

We should carry the Christmas spirit year-round because "he's who we are and why we're here," said Kimberly Turner of Frisco.