

# Beloit gets in the spirit

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Santa came early to Beloit this year.

Around 6 p.m. on Friday, Santa landed on the roof of First National Bank, 345 E. Grand Ave., much to the applause and screams of young children who gathered at the corner of Grand Avenue and State Street.

Santa came to help “fix” the lighting problem with the city’s tree.

“I want you all to close your eyes and think of your happiest Christmas memory,” Santa told the crowd. Then he counted down from 10, and the thousands of lights on the tree came to life.

Prior to his arrival, the crowd was informed of “SC1’s” travel via updates from “Canada Air” as his sleigh made its way to Beloit.

It was all part of the Downtown Beloit Association’s 20th Annual Grand Lighted Holiday Parade. Despite temperatures staying slightly below 30 degrees the crowds still showed up.

Beloit resident Josh Prengel brought his two sons, Corey and Joe, to the parade for the first time this year.

“We thought the kids would enjoy it,” he said. “It’s a chance for everyone to get together and have some fun.”

Jamie Seils said she thought the weather was a lot colder three years ago, and that it wouldn’t keep her from bringing her family.

“It’s for the tradition,” she said, adding she’s come to the parade for as long as she can remember. “I love watching the kids and everyone having a good time.”

Adults kept warm with hot chocolate from the Salvation Army, and children kept warm by running up and down the street waiting for the parade to begin.

Town of Beloit resident Phelon Voegeli said he’s been coming to the parade on-and-off for the last 12 years. This year he brought along his daughter.

“I told her there was a lighted parade and said let’s go!” he said.

The parade started around 6:30 p.m. and was led by the Beloit Police Department and an old Beloit Fire Department vehicle. Other floats included the Boy Scouts, All American Pro Rodeo and the Beloit Bombshells Roller Derby team.

Pizzazz, 313 State St. won the Holiday Window Decorating Contest with its “Christmas Pizzazz” window. Annabelle’s came in second with their owl design called “Owl about Christmas.”

Pizzazz won a \$25 gift card to Bagels and More, a Downtown Beloit Association T-Shirt and mug, and Annabelle’s won a \$20 gift card to Suds O’Hanahan Irish Pub.

No prizes were given out to the best float this year, said Crystal Buhmeyer, program coordinator for the Downtown Beloit Association.

She said next year prizes will be given out for the best floats. The hope is to encourage more participants to enter floats.

“Our goal is to bring back the prizes next year for a bigger and better year,” she said.

Buhmeyer said in the past the best floats were given cash prizes, but that hasn’t been the case for several years. The association is looking to bring back cash prizes, but nothing has been finalized.

“We’re looking at what we’ve done in the past and we’ll hopefully bring some really good floats next year.”