

Twinkling lights start season

By Clint Wolf cwolf@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Saturday, November 30, 2013 10:00 am

Lights were twinkling on parade floats as they rolled by. Children squealed with delight as candy was tossed from the floats. And, everyone wanted to shake hands with the jolly old gentleman in the red suit.

All of these scenes could be found in downtown Beloit Friday as the Grand Lighted Holiday Parade kicked off the holiday season in the Stateline Area.

The night air was brisk, but visitors to downtown Beloit kept warm by sipping hot chocolate provided by the Downtown Beloit Association. Others brought blankets to snuggle up in as the parade rolled by.

Gayle Howell was selling light sticks to children along Grand Avenue, and was doing pretty good business Friday evening. Jane Bentz was attracted by the glowing sticks and wanted to buy one for her great niece, Ryleigh Rose.

Bentz said it was her first time downtown for the Lighted Parade, and she and Ryleigh were looking forward to it.

Meanwhile, Carl Anderson, and his children Aidan and Adalyn Anderson, were also waiting to see the parade for the first time. The family is from South Barrington, Ill., but Carl's in-laws live in Roscoe, so they frequent the Stateline Area.

"We come down for the Farmers Market quite a bit," Carl said.

Shauna El-Amin, Downtown Beloit Association executive director, said there were plenty of people downtown enjoying this holiday favorite.

"It was awesome. There were tons of people down there, all having a good time," she said.

Before the parade started, holiday music was blaring from speakers at the corner of State Street and Grand Avenue as the crowd waited for the arrival of Santa Clause. As is the tradition in Beloit, Santa lands his sleigh on the roof of the First National Bank and Trust building and the Beloit Fire Department provides a ladder truck to lower the jolly old elf to the street to meet the cheering children.

Santa did not disappoint the crowds as he arrived shortly after 6 p.m., gave the countdown to lighting the holiday tree and then shook hands with children.

Then it was time for the parade, which featured everything from the awe inspiring to the somewhat ridiculous.

There were troupes of tap dancers followed by dachshunds wearing Christmas lights pulling a sleigh.

In fact, the lighted dachshunds were from the Janesville-Beloit Kennel Club, which won first place in the non-profit category of parade entries. The club was awarded \$100 as its first prize.

Other winners in the non-profit category were the Beloit Bombshells, which won second place and \$50, and Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church won third place and \$25.

In the for-profit category, the first place winner was Marx Dance Academy. Second Place went to Rising Stars and third place went to Jeff Redieske of Senz Insurance.