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FEATURED

Holiday lighted parade draws large crowd of mobile spectators

By CLINT WOLF News Editor
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Abby Miller puts some finishing touches on the Miss Wisconsin Sweeps float which was part of the Downtown Beloit Grand Holiday Lighted Parade Friday. The floats were parked in the Third Street parking lot in downtown Beloit and spectators drove by to admire the brightly lit floats.

Clint Wolf/Beloit Daily News

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BELOIT — Cars filed through the Third Street parking lot in downtown Beloit Friday to get a glimpse of lighted trailers, buses, and at the end, they were greeted by Santa and Mrs. Claus.

This was the slightly different take on the traditional Downtown Beloit Grand Holiday Parade, which was changed to keep everyone safe in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, instead of the lighted floats rolling down Grand Avenue as people lined the street to watch, the floats were parked and spectators drove by to admire the festive displays.

Fifteen floats were decorated with lights that twinkled with the spirit of the holidays. Judging from the line of cars and trucks that rolled through, many people were looking for some holiday cheer.

“We still wanted to give families an opportunity to get out and get in the Christmas spirit,” said Shauna El-Amin, executive director of the Downtown Beloit Association.

Volunteers were on hand to direct traffic and assist those who were setting up their floats.



Sarah Smith of the Dolphin Swim Club had a dolphin decked out in lights on top of her car as she waited for the crowds to arrive.

“We do it every year,” Smith said about the lighted parade. But, she noted this year was different and she didn’t quite know what to expect.

She did know she wanted to be a part of the event, because she felt that, since many schools are doing distance learning now and there are fewer activities for kids, this would be a welcome opportunity for families.

“It a chance to get kids out of the house to do something,” she said.

Huddled near a flatbed truck decorated with holiday lights was a group of young ladies with the Miss South Central Competition. Miss Turtle Creek Cosette Smith, Miss Rock River Valley Jennifer Schmidt, Miss South Central Sarah Dahdough and Miss West Allis Outstanding Teen Alyssa Harmon were gathered, wearing face masks, but ready to greet the crowds. They also were there to support the Caritas food pantry.

Sha-Nita Rhea, director of the Miss South Central Competition, said it was a rare chance for the girls to get together.

“This is their first appearance together since the COVID-19 pandemic began,” she said.

The lighted parade had many changes this year due to the pandemic. There was no candy thrown from floats and there was no grand entrance by Santa, but some traditions remained constant. There were winners named as the best floats were judged.

In the business division, first place went to Re-Max Ignite and second place went to Dewey's Towing. There was no third place winner because there were not enough business float entries.

In the non-profit division, Our Lady of the Assumption (OLA) won first place, Westside Flag Corps won second place and Cub Scouts Pack 621 won third place.

Clint Wolf