



December 14, 2008

Winter Carnival brings cheer downtown

Event has rides, cookie decorating, face painting, Santa's appearance

By *MORGAN DAY*
The Eagle-Gazette Staff

LANCASTER - If you couldn't find something to do in downtown Lancaster Saturday, you weren't looking hard enough.

You had the option of cookie-decorating in Four Reasons Bakery and Deli, painting a holiday ornament at Art & Clay on Main or checking out some live reindeer - if you're into that sort of thing.

It was all part of the city's third annual Winter Carnival. And it was a "big success," said Main Street Lancaster Director Karen Rotkis, who was dressed in a red sequined Santa outfit.

Rotkis manned the tree decorating area, where dozens of Christmas trees stood, some a little wobbly and crooked.

"Round about noon to 2, trees looked wonderful," she said near the close of the event. "But we had a little wind problem."

Employees from local businesses dressed up the trees to be taken home with families that are unable to buy their own. Fairfield County Job & Family Services helped Main Street Lancaster make that all happen.

Meanwhile, families made their rounds from local vendors selling holiday goodies to a Santa photograph station in Promotions by Design on Columbus Street.

Hanging out in the window of Promotions by Design were friends Jennifer Hutchinson, Kalynn Renko and Jordyn Whaley, all juniors at Lancaster High School.

The girls are members of Teen Institute, a school organization that promotes healthy life choices, and said they enjoyed helping the local business for the day.

They agreed the best part was working with the kids, who each got a turn on Santa's lap.

"Some of them get kind of scared, but then they start loosening up," Whaley, 17, said. "And it's nice to see how excited they get about the season."

They said although they're too old to get excited about seeing Santa, it's still fun helping the kids to believe in him.

Just outside, residents could hear the lyrics: "All you wanna do is ride around, Sally." It was the Brock Howard Band playing "Mustang Sally" inside Stix in Time, and the sound traveled for blocks.

Earlier in the day, Four Reasons played host to cookie-decorating. The back of the restaurant was filled with kids spreading colored frosting on Christmas cookies and dumping on them copious amounts of sprinkles.

Sisters Regina Long, of Lancaster, and Michelle Neely, of Upper Arlington, brought their kids inside to have some fun. Their mother, Jan Kiger, of Lancaster, watched as well.

"My sister called and said there's a winter festival going on," Neely said. "She said, 'Come on out and we can make this a wonderful holiday tradition for these guys.' "

Meanwhile, Maggie and Jared Long, ages 7 and 4, and Sophia and Ned Neely, ages 3 and 5, showed one another their tongues, which were multicolored from the sweets they had just decorated - and tasted.

Inside Art & Clay on Main, Madeline McCoy, 11, and Bailey McCoy, 15, sisters from Canal Winchester, sat together at a table and painted holiday ornaments.

Their grandma, Linda Everitt, of Lancaster, said the ornament-painting was her favorite activity of the day.

"It gives them a chance to do something," she said of her granddaughters. "It lets them be creative."

A Rushville singing trio called Lee and Sadler braved the chilly weather, which ranged between 24 and 36 degrees during the event, according to *AccuWeather.com*.

Rhonda Lee, Debbie Miller and Carolyn Sadler - clad in velour outfits rented from Westerman's Tuxedo Junction - sang "Winter Wonderland" with the help of a handheld stereo.

The singing group turned into street comediennes as Lee turned around, pulled up her hood and stuck yellow fake teeth in her mouth. She peered out from goofy fake glasses.

"I'm Miss Pricilla," she started off in a southern accent. "I come from the South ... We couldn't afford

much growin' up."

"Like a face lift?" Sadler chimed in as passersby stopped to laugh.
