

Hit by rainy, foggy skies, Santa's down but not out

By Sue Buck
Staff Writer

Rainy, foggy weather dealt Santa a foul blow, grounding his Dec. 4 entry into downtown Farmington by helicopter. He came, instead, on a fire truck.

And all eyes were riveted on that portly, timeless fellow, and the holiday spirit remained high despite the constant drizzle that fell.

"I wish it would snow instead of rain," said Jason Tobkin, 10, of Farmington. This was the first year Jason, along with his sister Valerie, 8, and brother Russell, 7, attended the event. They recently moved to Farmington from a Downriver community.

Boys especially seemed disappointed when Santa didn't descend from the skies. "I can't go up," the pilot at Metro Airport, told Judy Downey, Downtown Development Authority director, about 10:30 a.m.

Myles McKenzie, 3, also hoped for the helicopter arrival. "He was eager to get up and see Santa in the helicopter, according to grandparents Janis and Keith Reed.

Myles wanted answers to basic questions too, the Reeds said, like where were the reindeer and Santa's helpers, and he also wanted to know if Farmington was Santa's city.

But Myles kept his cool and didn't complain much because he knew Santa has eyes in the back of his head these pre-Christmas days.

Santa was accompanied by the Farmington High School marching band while their booster parents sold baked goods inside the tent, hoping to raise the \$200,000 needed for a trip to France.

"We hope to get corporate sponsorship, but it hasn't come through for us the way we thought," said Marcia Larscheidt, fund-raising chairman.

The holiday spirit also came to downtown Farmington with the second annual "Holiday Hunting" search. Children received activity sheets and trinkets relating to 12 holidays from participating merchants.

A dreidel was given for the Jewish holiday, and Swedish butter cookies were presented to honor



Quite a performance: Maureen Schiffman performs music and puppetry under a tent. Children are invited up on the stage to create a human "Chanukahliya."

St. Lucia's Day.

Nicole Semoniek, 8, of Farmington eagerly instructed her cousins, Ryan Young, 4, of Farmington and Lauren Delapaz, 4, on the Holiday Hunting activity.

In addition to its traditional activity, the library sponsored an art and writing contest called Holiday Expressions.

Farmington students were encouraged to depict an interesting aspect of a holiday from around the world through story, poetry, painting, or other artistic medium.

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony just prior to the Caroling Party at the library on Dec. 20.

Holiday Hunting coordinators encouraged attendees Saturday to bring their holiday packages to the tent to help support Team Farmington, Farmington area Special Olympics. The local group is composed of 160 athletes and 50 coaches.

Volunteers Russ Reynolds, Sandy Davis, Ginny Mohray and Suzi Wilson were some of the organizers who lent a hand.

"We're working with the cities (Farmington/Farmington Hills) on fund-raisers that will allow us to purchase uniforms and equipment," Wilson said.

Cheryl Collon, 21, as well as

other Special Olympics volunteers. "I play basketball, soccer and hockey," Collon said. "I enjoy meeting new people and training for tournaments."

Collon's participation began while she was a ninth-grader at East Middle School. Her mom, Sandi, is a Special Olympics coach.

Shoppers and kids got to ride a free trolley car to 12 stops. These stops included the Farmington Historical Museum and the Farmington Community Library.

The Civic Theater presented the youth-oriented movie "A Christmas Story" free several times that afternoon.

Ralph C. Morrison, a professional storyteller and peddler, also participated.

"I am a professional peddler licensed by the state of Michigan to hawk, vend and peddle my wares," Morrison said. "My wares include stories, programs, events and workshops gleaned from my peddler's cart of life experiences as a street peddler, educator, police officer, door-to-door salesman, entrepreneur, paramedic, cowboy, antique dealer, GI, hippie, husband, father, air-traffic controller, bill collector, world traveler, pursuit driving instructor, Japanese family member and more."



STAFF PHOTOS BY ANN HEALY

Seeing Santa: Oriel Feldman, 7 months old, gets her first look at Santa Claus inside a tent at the Downtown Farmington Center.



Songs of the season: The Ebenezer Goodtime Singers stroll around the shopping center singing traditional Christmas songs.

Clapping along: Dina Rand and her 21-month-old daughter Katy clap along to the traditional songs of Hanukkah performed by Maureen Schiffman.



The Gift List

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