

Jingle into the holidays



PAUL FRANZ / Staff Photo

Recreation Department Director Christy Moore, Santa and Mrs. Claus throw the switch to light the holiday tree at the JingleFest Tree Lighting at Veterans Mall on Friday night.

Caroling, candles and cocoa set the tone for the season

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Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — Families and groups of friends bundled up in the winter chill on Friday night for a town tradition of 12 years: the tree lighting in Veterans Mall.

For the first night of JingleFest, carolers with Twice as Smart, Musica Franklin and Stoneleigh-Burnham sang Christmas classics like “Hark to the Bells” and “All I Want for Christmas (Is My Two Front Teeth)” before their families and other visitors chimed in for “Community Car-

oling,” holding candles and sipping hot chocolate between lyrics.

When the singing stopped at 6 p.m., the group of around 15 locals and visitors watched as the Christmas tree came to life with red, blue, orange and green lights. Gloves, mittens and a few brave bare hands applauded.

“We love to celebrate with the town,” said Ruby Henry, who brought her 5-year-old along for the first night of Jingle Fest traditions. While listening to carols, she reunited with Greenfield friends.

The first night of JingleFest fun

continued across the street at Cleary Jewelers, where families dropped in for hot chocolate, cookies and a chat with the star of JingleFest, Santa Claus himself.

“This gets me in the Christmas spirit,” said Jeff Gordon, the Greenfield resident in the red and white suit. After growing out his white beard and mustache for “No-Shave November,” Gordon first sported the Santa uniform to cheer up employees over Zoom during the pandemic. About six years later, he now makes 21 stops as Santa Claus in just 29 days.

Gordon said talking to kids is “a reminder of a simpler time when we didn’t have the concerns that adults have.” He added that he often finds himself feeling like a kid celebrating Christmas again.

Every penny he and his partner in Christmas crime, Mrs. Claus, his wife Deb Gordon, make as the Clauses helps fund the Courageous Strides riding program, which provides equine-assisted activities to military veterans and individuals who are recovering from emotional



PAUL FRANZ / Staff Photo

A child hits the candy button to turn on the sound and additional light on the Greenfield Common on Friday night.

JingleFest rings in holidays

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and physical trauma.

“It’s something that we do to give back,” explained Jeff Gordon, the marketing manager at Courageous Strides.

Deb Gordon, speaking as both Mrs. Claus and the president and instructor at Courageous Strides, said the holiday tradition is about “bringing magic back.”

Kerry Semaski, owner of Cleary Jewelers, said Santa has greeted kids in her family store for every year of JingleFest.

“It’s always been a nice community event to truly kick off the holiday season,” Semaski said. “It brings the community together and gets people downtown.”

The Greenfield Recreation Department took the wheel of JingleFest this year for the first time since the Greenfield Business Association transferred leadership to the department, bringing with it a sleighful of holiday-themed workshops. JingleFest attendees decorated cookies at 170 Main Street and the YMCA Social Room, competed in a Gingerbread House Contest at Rubber Duck Tech Repair, crafted jingle bracelets at the Greenfield Public Library and other holiday creations at the LAVA Center and fashioned their own wreaths at 170 Main Street.

JingleFest traditions like



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the tree lighting, horse drawn-wagon rides and plenty of holiday shopping opportunities continue this year with several markets selling homemade crafts around town.

While listening to the carolers in Veterans Mall with her family, Greenfield resi-

dent Erica Clark described JingleFest as an important “pocket of enjoyment” amid the difficulties of everyday life and the broader sociopolitical situation.

“Everybody faces hardships. Stuff like this helps bring a little joy into the world,” Clark said.