

In the air there's a feeling of Christmas in downtown Duncan



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It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in downtown Duncan.

And the yuletide joy will hit a feverish pitch with the Christmas kick-off celebrations Friday and the arrival of Santa Claus.

There's a slight change to the arrival of the jolly old fellow that people have become accustomed to in the past, according to Duncan Business Improvement Area Society manager MaryAnn Hartley.

"Santa is arriving differently, not on the rooftop (of Duncan City Hall)," she said. "He's going to arrive on the oldest firetruck they (Duncan Fire Department) have.

"There's going to be a Santa route. Coming through the streets creates more of a buzz."

Festivities downtown will begin around 5:30 p.m. and Santa arrives shortly after 6.

He'll ride the restored firetruck around town via Station and Craig Streets and spread the crowd around so everyone can get a close look at him.

It'll almost be in a parade style with Santa riding in the fire department's antique truck except without bands and floats or other parade entries.

There will also be hay rides again around downtown again. "That seems to be really popular," said Hartley.

The festive atmosphere surrounding Santa's fanfare will include roasted chestnuts available at various locations and community groups setting up to create an awareness of programs.

Big Brothers Big Sisters, located above the Old Firehouse Wine Bar, are holding an open house and visitors to the Cowichan Valley Museum will be treated to a special Christmas display.

The Smiley family will be entertaining on the main stage in City Square in its inimitable style. A secondary stage will be located near Just Jake's with performances by choirs and bands — including Queen of Angels and Queen Margaret's School groups, the Carlson School of Dance and the Cowichan Valley Concert Band.

Shortly after 8 p.m., fireworks will start exploding in the sky above City Hall.

"It's a great viewing point," said Hartley. "You can actually see it from quite a distance."

All in all, "It looks like a good community event and a kickoff to the Christmas season," Hartley said. "The only thing we need to work on is the weather."

Fortunately, the weather is expected to be decent.

Old-fashioned feel

The Cowichan Valley Museum helps launch the holiday season tonight with its 9th-annual Christmas Past Comes Alive! event.

This fun-filled family activity is held in the Train Station, from 5:30 to 7:45 p.m., during Duncan's Christmas Kick-Off.

Museum volunteers, dressed in period costumes and assuming identities from Cowichan's past, are ensconced throughout the museum displays.

This year, the Christmas train display features a model of the heritage designated Duncan Train Station and some fantastic photographs of Duncan as it was decades ago. Come to the museum to see this display, on view until Dec. 19.

The museum is open Wednesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays 1 to 4 p.m. Admission is by donation.

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