

Santa Claus still coming to Bancroft



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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

The Bancroft Lions Club says that Santa Claus is still coming to town, but it will be in a different fashion. Instead of Santa coming down the main street of town with the traditional parade to visit with everyone, he will be stationed at the North Hastings Community Centre.

This year the parade will be standing still in the arena parking lot. The event will start at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4 and will last until 7:30 p.m. Youth and families will be able to tour the displays via car. A route will be laid out around the displays in the parking lot so that drivers can parade by the displays. At the entrance of the parade displays, the public will be asked to drop off a donation to the North Hastings Community Cupboard.

The displays will start on the school side and wrap around the parking lot, ending next to the lot's exit next to the arena. It is there that the youth will get to see Santa, who will be physically distanced. However, with the help of some magical tools he will be able to give out sweet treats to both the young and young at heart.

The Lions Club is looking for more displays to join in the parade. The traditional floats are welcome but the Lions also hope that this standing still parade will give participants an opportunity to think outside the box. "We are encouraging display makers to bring in lights, sounds, moving parts, everything is welcome as long as it fits with the Christmas holiday theme. It could be anything from Christmas at the beach to the Grinch Who Stole Christmas, or something completely new," explained Lion Bryan Adams.

There are no restrictions on size or shape of the display. However, if electricity is needed display designers are asked to supply their own electrical source. Those interested in participating must register before Monday, Nov. 30, with a rough description of the display, complete with measurements so that the Lions Club can plan out where the displays will be placed and organize the route. Those interested can contact Lion Laverne Stapley at 613-332-3610 or Lion Steve Scally at 613-334-1980. "With the parade we were able to shift people and floats around if there was a last minute entry, but because this year the displays are static and it's the viewers who are moving, we can't do that. So, we need to know ahead of time so we can make sure the floats and displays go in just the right spot. For example, you don't want to put a live band next to a float with a loud generator. It just wouldn't work. So, we need to know early this year," says Scally.

The Lions Club is also looking to work with the Town of Bancroft and the Bancroft Business Improvement Association to promote

later shopping that night and to get businesses and property owners to decorate their homes and shops as well.

That way the parade wouldn't have to stop at the arena. It could continue on throughout the town and people can drive around to see all the Christmas lights and displays, while getting a start on the Christmas shopping and buying local. Originally when the Lions Club started planning this year's parade in August they thought that the parade could go on as it traditionally had in the past. Then in October when COVID-19 cases started to rise again, they started thinking if a parade was really a good idea. Then they thought of the static parades held by other Lions Clubs and other organizations so far this year and decided that that was what the 2020 Santa Claus Christmas Parade was going to look like as well.

?It's ideal for everyone's safety,? said Adams. ?People stay with their floats or displays, and the families can stay in their cars and can still see everything.?

With how rough 2020 has been on the community with both COVID-19 and the resulting recommendations and restrictions, the Lions Club didn't want to cancel the parade. So they developed this new way to hold the community's traditional kick-starter of the Christmas season.

?You think about the Who's down in Whoville when the Grinch stole Christmas. They didn't need the Christmas presents and all that they just needed to be with each other to celebrate, that sense of community. That's what the Lions support,? explained Scally.

Traditionally, the Lions Club would be hosting an auction the week before the parade to help fundraise for it and other Lions Club events. Since this year they are unable to hold it due to COVID-19 they are asking for donations from the community. Those interested in supporting the 2020 parade can donate at their website <https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/bancroftlionson>.