

Whitney Santa Claus Parade delights attendees



By Mike Riley

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter Called "the cutest little parade you ever did see," the Whitney Santa Claus Parade made its way through downtown Whitney in South Algonquin Township on Dec. 18, starting at 2 p.m. This was followed by Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus meeting and greeting the community's children and giving them treats. Organizers Tarrah Hovinga and Ramona Brown comment on this annual festive event, in addition to various parade attendees. Hovinga and Brown, who are celebrating their sixth year organizing the event, issued the following statement to Bancroft This Week on Dec. 15: "Join Jolly Saint Nick and all of his festive helpers on Sunday, December 18 at 2 p.m. in Whitney as he spreads Christmas love in the cutest little parade that you ever did see!! You will see familiar friends and surprise new friends. Kids, don't forget to visit Mr. and Mrs. Claus after the parade at the Lester Smith Building (rink) for treats! Parents, bring your cameras!," they said in their statement. The parade started at 75 Lake Street, continued down Ottawa Street and Hay Creek Road, and ended up at 2nd Avenue. The floats lined up at 1:30 p.m. for the 2 p.m. start, and there were prizes awarded for the best floats, courtesy of South Algonquin Township. They donated a \$150 first prize, a \$100 second prize and a \$50 third prize. "We wish to thank the generous members of our community for the donations of candy, floats and time! We've been blessed to have so many community members offering help, donating candy as well as gifts from Santa. So far, we have six confirmed floats plus the paramedics and firefighters will be joining in as well. You will also see some of our recently elected South Algonquin council members in the parade; Joan Kuiack and Laurie Siydock, as well as Mayor Ethel LaValley. Looking forward to [everyone] attending again this year. Merry Christmas and wishing you the very best in 2023!," they said in their Dec. 15 statement. Right before the parade began, Brown was taking pictures of the people and the floats, lining them all up and adding any extra entries. She said they then have a helper that takes the list to the judges, who will then choose the winners. She also mentioned a new addition to the parade this year, the OPP, which she said they were all excited about. "The people put their heart into it. Right from babies to the elders, they enjoy it. The reason why we do this route through the streets instead of at the highway is because it catches a few of the elders' homes and then they can actually watch it from the comfort of their living room. It's fantastic. I think this weather today is the best weather we've had in six years," she says. Sean Doyle and Sara Moyle are enjoying the parade for the second year, as well as toasting their second year as Whitney residents, having moved up from Toronto. "We thought it was the most charming, wonderful and warm community celebration and that's why we're here. We love community and this is sort of community in a nutshell," she says. "Everybody comes out, it's great," he says. "It's a labour of love, 100 per cent, and anything we can do to support it. And it gets us in the [Christmas] mood too," she says. David, Diane and Annie were also outside their home taking in the parade with their dog, Moose. Diane mentioned it was Annie's first Christmas here in Whitney. "It's just like a movie because everything is so Christmas perfect. It's a good feeling around here," she says. After the parade, Hovinga and Brown issued the following statement on Facebook, commenting on what a tremendous parade that it had been. "Without all of you it would not be the success it is each and every year. Ramona and I would like to thank everyone for all the donations, our volunteers, all the people who worked so hard on their floats, our councillors Laurie [Siydock], Joan [Kuiack] and Shawn [Pigeon], and our Mayor

Ethel Birkett LaValley. Of course, we need to thank Santa and Mrs. Claus for coming all the way from the North Pole! they said. Hovinga and Brown expressed how different and unique the floats were and that they loved them all, but ultimately the judges had chosen three winners. The first place went to Kidz Kastle Whitney plus a donation from SABA, McRae Lumber Company plus a donation from SABA netted second place, while SPS Multiservice Contracting achieved a third-place finish. Brown and Hovinga finished off by congratulating everyone. We wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Years!