

Victorian Christmas Walk in Bethalto once again spreads holiday spirit for 25th time

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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BETHALTO - The 25th **Victorian Christmas Walk in Downtown Bethalto** this past Sunday had some issues with rain beforehand, but by walk time the weather cleared and the holiday spirit was brought to life.

The event is always held on the second Sunday of each December and offers visitors direct participation of the life during the Victorian era. The Bethalto Spirit hosts and organizes the Christmas Walk. The event started with a Community Christmas Concert at 3 p.m. at First Baptist Church in Bethalto. The theme this year for the concert was “Repeat the Sounding Joy” and concluded with a special tribute to first responders. The concert was packed with people, with guesses of some 700 in attendance.

Bethalto Mayor Alan Winslow said the concert was exceptional and the tribute to first responders was “very moving.”

“The walk went on as planned,” Winslow said. “The rain held off with only an occasional light mist. Attendance at the walk was lighter than usual no doubt due to the expectations of heavy rain, but it was still a wonderful event.”

The downtown portion of the walk began at 4 p.m. Sunday. This unique program traditionally offers carriage rides, strolling carolers, characters in period costume, a hand bell concert, and Santa’s workshop where children can make a toy with Santa’s elves and then get a picture taken with Santa, Winslow said.

Numerous free vendors were located throughout downtown giving away such goodies as cookies, popcorn, chestnuts, donuts, coffee, hot chocolate, and wassail. Various Christmas displays were located at the Village Hall, the Museum, the Log Cabin, the Seniors Center and throughout the downtown area.

Andy Augustine, a longtime supporter of the walk and owner of an insurance business in Bethalto, said the weather broke and the walk went off in normal fashion.

“We were somewhat anxious with the weather forecast, but the rain stopped and people were able to move around and enjoy themselves,” he said. “We were all very well pleased with how the walk was received. People rode carriages and hung around and talked. All the venues were visited with refreshments of hot chocolate and popcorn. Things were handed out and visited by a lot of people.”

Jeff Allsman of Bethalto said the Community Concert kicked everything off and was standing room only.

“We put up extra chairs,” he said for the concert. “I am guessing we had 750 people there. The concert went really well. It brought back some of the past directors and performers over the last 25 years and reprised some of the original selections. The concert gave people a chance to reminisce of some of the best moments the last 25 years.”

Allsman said he was especially touched by the salute to first responders at the conclusion of the concert.

“It has been a tough couple years for law enforcement throughout the country and we thought we should let them know we appreciate what they do in our community,” he said.