

For Immediate Release



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Holiday Fest Events United East Hartford Community

East Hartford, CT— East Hartford Parks and Recreation Department and the Beautification Commission just wrapped up an exciting weekend of Holiday Fest events and activities.

On Friday, December 6th, the annual Tree Lighting and Carol Sing were held at the Town Green, which was partially snow-covered and beautifully decorated for the holidays. Despite the cold temperatures, more than 160 residents attended and kept warm with steaming cups of hot cocoa and cookies that were available to all. Everyone enjoyed singing along with students in the East Hartford High School and Middle School choruses, as well as guest appearances by Frosty the Snowman, Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and of course, Santa Claus himself. Mike Alan, Traffic Reporter from WTIC Am was the guest emcee for this event. New this year, white glow sticks and 3-D glasses were provided for those in attendance, which made lights appear as though they had a Santa halo around them.

Also on Friday, we hosted our 8th Annual Swim with Santa event at the High School pool. East Hartford Police Department Dive Team member Officer Woody Tinsley once again made this unique event possible, and local photographer Peter Venoutsos volunteered his time to capture underwater photos of anyone who wanted to join Santa. Attendees were able to create crafts, snack on decorated (ice cream) cones with frosting and assorted candies, enjoy a hot cocoa bar with lots of toppings and take a dip in the pool with special floats and water toys while listening to holiday music. More than 50 residents attended and 38 donated toys were collected for the Social Services' Holiday Toy Program.

On Sunday, December 8th, over 300 residents enjoyed a special visit from Santa Claus at the Community Cultural Center! We also had some of the cast from the movie Frozen (Elsa, Anna, and Olaf) in a themed Frozen Village room complete with Elsa's snowflake ornament crafts for anyone who wanted to make one to take home. The hallways and activity rooms were transformed into a themed winter wonderland and a variety of family-friendly activities were offered. East Hartford Youth Services and Library staff were on site with giveaways and information on their programs, events and other services. The East Hartford Education Association generously provided a free book to each child. Costumed characters roamed the hallways and posed for pictures with delighted residents. From ornament and card making, to inflatables, to glitter tattoos and face painting, to cookie decorating, to horse drawn carriage rides and a live ice carving demonstration, this event truly offered something for everyone.

Santa's Visit wouldn't be complete without an opportunity to meet the big man in red himself, so everyone, young or old, had a chance to sit with Santa to tell him their wishes, in a room fully decorated for the whole Santa experience. Every child who visited Santa was given a small toy, and each family received a framed 4x6 photo of their visit with Santa to take home.

These events were made possible with the assistance of East Hartford Police Department Officer Woody Tinsley and his elves, local photographer Peter Venoutsos, East Hartford Fire Department Station 1, the Parks Department, Mike Walsh, volunteers from East Hartford High School, the Beautification Commission as well as Parks and Recreation staff.

The Town of East Hartford and the East Hartford Parks and Recreation Department would like to thank everyone who attended, volunteered, donated toys or non-perishable food items for the town's food banks, and helped in some way to bring holiday cheer to the East Hartford community. As always, we strive to provide exceptional events for the East Hartford community and we are already looking forward to next year's events!