



Santa Claus high-fives Khalil Carter, 4, during the Christmas Tree Lighting and Holiday Festivities in downtown Fairfield, Friday, Dec. 1, 2017. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

Downtown Fairfield festivities kick off Christmas season

By [Susan Hiland](#) December, 2017

FAIRFIELD — The evening started off surprisingly quiet Friday downtown, considering what was in store.

Tables set along Texas Street with vendors selling their wares. Ponies were hooked up and ready to lift the hearts of little children with a joyful ride. At the center of it all was the Christmas tree.

Within an hour, hundreds of visitors were milling about downtown for the main event, the annual lighting of the Christmas tree.

Children held red mesh Christmas stockings, which they used to run to various stores for a scavenger hunt. After collecting all the items on the list from the various downtown stores, the children were entered into a drawing to win a \$250 gift card.

Gala Covering Rentals gave out coloring books.

“We usually have Santa Claus here but this year they are giving another business the opportunity to host Santa,” said Jane Wesley, co-owner. “They really remember that, too.”

It was also a chance for downtown businesses to show off their wares.

“We do a little bit of everything in here,” Wesley said. “From sewing, to rentals for linens and even floral arrangements.”

Down the street and past the ponies were several booths from a variety of groups in the area, including the Matt Garcia Foundation, which hosted a family fun Winter Carnival Games and Activities tent that took up most of the block.

Children could take pictures with “reindeer,” or rather a pony with antlers, as well as play games.

Sakina Ali, 18, of Fairfield, organized the event with the help of other volunteers from the Matt Garcia Foundation.

“We wanted to do something that included all ages from Fairfield,” she said. “It is really about keeping Matt’s dream alive and making this for everyone to enjoy.”

Ali never met Matt Garcia but his influence is still felt by many people, she said. The city councilman was 22 when he was shot Labor Day night in 2008 in a case of mistaken identity. Garcia died the next day. The foundation was started in his honor.

The games are simple enough for all ages, Ali said. The booth also had an opportunity for people to make a toy donation, canned food donation and a donation for the foundation.

“This event could not happen without our volunteers,” said Margaret Manzo, executive director of the Fairfield Main Street Association.

More volunteers came in by the minute looking for directions; Manzo was busy making sure everyone knew what they needed to do.

“They have a few new things this year including the Holy Spirit Choir who will be singing before the tree lighting,” she said.

In front of the stage, Dance-Sing Stars members put on a holiday dance show, followed by the Real Life Church worship band and the Folklorico Juvenil Danzantes.

Warm hot chocolate and hot popcorn helped beat back the chill in the air as some visitors took a hay ride around downtown.

The evening concluded with musical entertainment from the Crystal Middle School band and choir.