

Children enjoy Holiday on Main Street event



Caroline Entwistle, 6, sits with Mrs. Claus at Holiday on Main Street in the Children's Museum Saturday November 26, 2011 in Utica. Kathleen Duncan / Observer - Dispatch

By DAN MINER Observer-Dispatch Posted Nov 26, 2011 @ 01:01 PM

UTICA — If reports of fights breaking out at department stores across the country weren't enough evidence the Christmas season had begun, the scene on Main Street on Saturday sealed it.

Santa and Mrs. Claus sat on the third floor of the Children's Museum of History, Natural History, Science and Technology. They welcomed a steady stream of young children, listening to their fondest wishes and then sending them back into their parents' arms.

“We come every year,” said Kate Entwistle, a Litchfield resident. “It's our first stop to see Santa.” Entwistle spoke just after her three children - Caroline, 6, Lucas, 5, and Josh, 2 - had jumped off the red-costumed man's lap and walked to another exhibit with their father, Matt.

The event, Holiday on Main Street, has been run for roughly 10 years, said Marlene Brown, executive director of the museum. More than 180 people made use of the building's four floors, many interactive exhibits and holiday elements by day's end, she said.

Brown said there is an effort to promote the event for all cultures, including activity sheets available that explain the differences, similarities and rationale for holiday observances in November and December of a number of different religions. “It's to honor all the diversity and cultures of people that live in the Utica region,” she said.

She also said the effort to make the museum a place where children can learn by taking part in activities makes it an ideal location for such events. “That's always been my philosophy,” Brown said. “They learn best by doing.” On Saturday, that recipe seemed to have worked, as children and parents took part in exhibit after exhibit. Brown directed employees with hand-held radios. She said the event has grown each year in its number of volunteers, exhibits and attendees.

It impressed at least one-first attendee, Jeanne Schmidt of Richfield Springs. Schmidt, a New Hartford native, showed up with her husband, Peter, one-year-old daughter, Lilia, and members of her extended family. “It's just awesome,” Jeanne Schmidt said of the museum. “There's so much to do and it's very kid-friendly.” Like most of the children in attendance, Lilia got a chance to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus. Lilia wouldn't sit on their lap, but did give each of the Christmas icons a kiss.