

# Tree lighting ceremony brings hundreds to Village Hall

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For many years, Homer Glen has celebrated the start of the holiday season with a tree lighting ceremony, but this year's ceremony set the stage for a new tradition for the community.

Presented by the Village of Homer Glen, this year's tree lighting ceremony was hosted at the new Village Hall. With the new location, more residents were drawn to the event, including many longtime residents who have never before attended the annual tree lighting ceremony.

According to Mayor George Yukich, Homer Glen's annual tree lighting ceremony has been hosted at various locations throughout the years, including Stonebridge Park and at the corner of 151st Street and Bell Road. With the new, permanent location, the Village marked another new tradition for Homer Glen residents by planting a tree outside of Village Hall that will be used in all of the future tree lighting ceremonies.

"We had the tree planted here, so it's here every year, and it will grow with the village," he said.

Honoring previous tradition, Santa Claus arrived on a fire truck to flip the switch to turn on the lights. Additionally, students from Providence Catholic High School's Singing Celtics were present to sing Christmas carols before and after the tree lighting.

Providence students Allie Boyer, Katie Saunders and Abby Schaefer were several who volunteered to perform.

"It brought a lot of the joy to the kids," Schaefer said.

Utilizing the new Village Hall, the event was able to bring the community together in a warm space for hot chocolate, visits with Santa Claus and crafts. Also, the first 100 children who arrived received a goody bag from Fannie May Fine Chocolates.

"We have inside [Village Hall] open so people can stay warm," Yukich said. "... It brings the community together, and that's what we've been trying to do for a long time. ... Bringing the community together is important to us."

While the Village began new traditions, many families did, as well. Kari Kreiter moved to Homer Glen this year and enjoyed the festive surroundings.

"We came to get in the holiday spirit," Kreiter said.

Accompanied by her children, nephews, sister and aunt, she said it is likely they will keep attending the tree lighting ceremony going forward.

Having lived in Homer Glen for 31 years, Kreiter's aunt, Sandy Kulik, said that she had never attended a tree lighting ceremony.

"It's really nice; my kids are all grown, but I would have come anyway," Kulik said.

Alan Doubek and his wife, Marialuisa, have lived in Homer Glen for about 18 years. The two brought their 6-month-old English bulldog, Frankie, to the ceremony in honor of his first Christmas.

"We wanted to see the lighting," Alan said. "... We also wanted to see the new facility."

Having never attended a lighting ceremony before, he said that the couple would like to continue to attend in the future.

Homer Glen Village Board Trustee Christina Neitzke-Troiike also had never attended a tree lighting ceremony, but having her new daughter, Teddi, 1, she said that she decided to attend this year.

"I came this year because it's the first year in Village Hall, and I've never been to a tree lighting before," she said. "It was a great turnout, and now we have our own tree."



*Providence Catholic High School Singing Celtics choir members (left to right) Allie Boyer, Abby Schaefer and Katie Saunders sing Christmas carols Friday, Dec. 2, during the Homer Glen tree lighting ceremony outside Village Hall. Photo by Paul Bergstrom/22nd Century Media*