

Mother Nature and Parades

Mother Nature must have felt the Christmas Spirit last Saturday because she kindly held off the forecasted rain until after Destin's annual Christmas Parade. Snowbird organizer Charles Cassell enlisted 15 hearty volunteers to walk the mile and a half route along Emerald Coast Parkway from Main Street to Stahlman Avenue. Children were cheering with outstretched arms for the colorful beads being flung and hung around their necks while the necks of many adults were stretched to get a good look at Dean Harper's classic 1954 Chevy pick-up which sported the bright new sign that read, "Merry Christmas from the Destin Snowbirds." Merriment was the mood of the morning.



Mother Nature showed kindness on Saturday, not so from Old Man Winter on Sunday! The Crab Island Cantina was decked with ribbons and lights but also with stocking caps, scarves, coats and gloves as a sell-out crowd braved the seemingly frigid winds to watch the Holiday Lighted Boat Parade. While a few ventured out to get a clear look at each boat that might win their vote as the best-decorated, most opted for a slightly distorted view behind lowered plastic windows to enjoy the warmth of overhead heaters. Chairpersons Cindy and Ray Varnell were able to tame the temperature by serving up a feast of pasta and meatballs with all the trimmings and topped it off with scrumptious cheesecake and hot coffee. It was tough to hear the grand finale of fireworks over all the laughter and enjoyment of the evening. That's because, as everyone knows, nobody has more fun than snowbirds.



By Tuesday morning the winds subsided, the sky was blue and the warm sun lured the flock to The Roost for the final meeting of 2018. In fact, first-time snowbirds, Fred and Joanna Schilpzand, were lured all the way from The Netherlands. "We heard that Destin was a classy place," said Fred. "We find it to be clean and mature," he added with a playful smile. The Schilpzands are looking forward to playing some golf and bridge and meeting a variety of people with interesting stories to share.



In the back of the meeting room, JoAnne Andrychuk and her crafters had an assortment of hand-made, one-of-a-kind, gift-potential artefacts for sale. In the front of the room, music director Nancy Thiele was preparing the Emerald Coast Community Band for what turned out to be an energetic, joy-filled performance of beloved Christmas favorites. The spirit of "Christmas Present" was so apparent she could almost be seen. What could be visibly seen, was another manifestation of the club's generosity. A check for \$250 was presented to Mission Love Seeds, a Destin based non-profit organization whose mission is to serve the poor. MLS is planning a Christmas party on December 19, for the children of Panama City who lost virtually everything due to hurricane Michael. Snowbirds who are looking for opportunities to volunteer or to donate were encouraged to check the Mission Love Seeds website and Facebook page.



If you haven't had an opportunity to sign up as a snowbird yet, the Big Registration will be Thursday, January 3, from 1 to 3 p.m. If for some reason you can't make that, there will be opportunities to register before each Tuesday morning meeting from 7:30 to 8:15 and from 10 to 10:45. The next Tuesday morning meeting will be Tuesday, January 9, 2019 at 8:30 and again at 11 a.m. Many of the activities including bowling, golf and cards will also begin in January, so be sure to check the website at www.destinsnowbirds.org.

For those who are returning north to celebrate the holidays with family, safe travels! Have a Very Merry Christmas. We'll look forward to your return in the New Year.