



The El Hasa Shriners perform their synronized driving act down Rt. 10 in their signature go-karts every year in the Chester Christmas parade.

## Kiwanis Club Prepares for Annual Christmas Parade

**ELYSE REEL** ▶ Everyone has their own Christmas traditions, and Chester is no different. Each year, when December rolls around, locals can always count on the Kiwanis Club to host their annual Christmas parade down Rt. 10.

“As long as I’ve lived in Chester, the parade has been going on,” says Angie McDaniel, parade coordinator. “Before the Kiwanis Club put it together, the Jaycees did.”

This year’s parade, themed “It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas...” is scheduled for December 14 at 2 p.m. The parade begins at the Chester YMCA on Rt. 10 and ends at the Chester Village Green.

An average of 5,000 people show up to watch the Christmas parade every year, rain or shine. “The past two years, we’ve had gorgeous weather; you could walk outside with just a sweater on,” McDaniel

says. “One year it was sleeting, but everyone still went to the parade!” And there will be plenty for viewers to feast their eyes on. “By [last] Monday, 34 groups had signed up to participate, and I’ve gotten so many calls since then that it’s easily going to push to 50,” McDaniel says. Returning groups – and winners in past years – include equestrian group Suits Up, the Dance Xplosion team, and the Oldies But Goodies Classic Cars Cruizers.

And of course, no parade would be complete without Christmas’ biggest celebrities: “Santa and Mrs. Claus will be riding the fire truck!” promises McDaniel.

Though the parade won’t be held until December, preparation for it begins months in advance. “I start in July and August to get the permits turned in, because they need to be in 90 days in advance, and work with

the road closing crew and talking to the sheriff’s department and the county,” McDaniel says. “Then we have to make sure the car troops aren’t near the walking troops, and the bands aren’t behind the horses – it’s a good four or five months of work before December arrives.”

But it’s not just work from the Kiwanis Club that makes the Christmas parade a success every year. “If it weren’t for the businesses in this area and the entirety of Chester helping, it wouldn’t work,” McDaniel says. “It takes so many people to make this happen. At least 30 officers from the sheriff’s department to come in on Sunday, working all afternoon, making sure everyone’s safe and everything goes well. Heritage Chevrolet provides the cars every year. Jay Burchell has always pitched in with everything we’ve needed.

He’s always been there for us.”

She adds, “When we call it the Chester parade, it really is. It’s a Chester effort to pull the parade off.”

When all of the work is complete, however, McDaniel and the rest of the Kiwanis Club know it’s all been worth it. “The economy on a whole has been such a damper on people’s lives, and we’re trying to give people something to look forward to,” she says. “It’s not going to cost anything to bring your kids out

to this, and it looks like it’s shaping up to be a really great event.

“It doesn’t matter how old you get; seeing Santa Claus coming down the road at the end makes it all worthwhile.”

The road closing crew will begin closing Rt. 10 between the Chester YMCA and the Village Green at 1:45 p.m. on December 14, 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the parade.

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