

SANTA AND GANG COME TO TOWN

Christmas – and Santa, Mrs. Claus & Rudolph – arrive at the Arts Center



The holiday tradition returns in November, with the town's official Christmas Tree Lighting – kick off the holiday season with family and friends at this free community festival.

Christmas comes early, 3:30-5:30 p.m. on Nov. 26. The tree, which is located in the Arts Center's parking lot, is the official Hilton Head Island Christmas tree. And the event promises to be an old-fashioned Yuletide celebration that will help you deck the halls.

The festival features many activities for children, such as face painting and holiday crafts. There will also be plenty of photo opportunities with the aforementioned Mr. Claus, as well as a musical performance from the cast of *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Hot chocolate, coffee and treats will be for sale to help keep you warm.

Returning to join Santa this year will be his wife, Mrs. Claus, and his favorite red-nosed reindeer, Rudolph.

"Because our festival comes early in the holiday season, we're able to not only book Santa but his wife and Rudolph, too," said Kathleen Bateson, Arts Center president and CEO. "It's a busy time of year for the Clauses and Rudolph,

so we're very lucky to get all three here from the North Pole!"

"This is definitely a treat for the whole family," said director of education Alana Adams. "Kids love it. It's fun to see their faces light up when they see Santa Claus and the big tree. It really makes you feel like a kid again."

The event kicks off with a parade at 3:30 p.m. and runs until 5:30 p.m., with the tree lighting capping off the evening. In addition to the performances and children's activities, Santa hats and Elves hats will be for sale.

Adams said there will also be opportunities to help the less fortunate. Food and toy donations will be collected. There will be a Christmas ornament-decoration activity for the children to design their own ornament that is placed on the city's Christmas tree. Money raised from the craft goes to the Deep Well Project, a local charity that helps families in need.

"It's a great event, because we celebrate as a community, and it's a real positive atmosphere," Bateson said.

"It's our holiday gift and 'thank you' to the community for all the support it gives us throughout the year."