



City of Slidell

Dept. of Cultural & Public Affairs • Press Release for Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE

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HOLIDAY LIGHTING AND CHRISTMAS TRAIN STILL OPEN FOR VIEWING

Though the City of Slidell's Christmas Under the Stars festivities have ended, the Griffith Park holiday lights and Parade of Trees will continue to be lit nightly until 10 p.m. through Jan 1. The park is located in Olde Towne Slidell, adjacent to City Hall and the Slidell Municipal Auditorium.

By popular demand, the Christmas train and village display will also offer extended viewing hours. The display, which is housed in the community meeting room on the first floor of City Hall, will be open from noon to 4 p.m. on Monday, Dec. 21 and Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 28 and 29. Admission is free.

"This display has been such a popular part of the city's holiday offerings," said Slidell Mayor Ben O. Morris. "So many of our citizens expressed gratitude that it's now hosted in City Hall, adjacent to all of the Christmas Under the Stars festivities. We're so grateful for the many volunteers who have made this possible."

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the display was housed in the city's Recreation Hall on the outer edge of Griffith Park, and maintained by Martin-Marietta retirees. Though all of the electric trains were ruined by floodwaters, many of the miniature houses have since been cleaned up and repaired. The Christmas Train and Village tradition was resumed by a new crew of volunteers headed by Sam Caruso, Jr. The display was designed by Ian Hiler, who was joined in building the set by Caruso, Joe Sanford and Chris Richier. This year's efforts were complemented with new volunteers Lee Hales, Anna Caruso and WWII Veteran Pat Ryan.



Caruso was particularly impressed by the youthfulness of Ryan, an octogenarian with "endless energy," he said. "He was climbing under tables and running wires like a seasoned pro. It was amazing."

The Christmas Train and Village exhibit was hosted on behalf of the city by Slidell Art League in 2007 and DuBuisson's Art Corner in 2008, each of which also hosted the Slidell Cultural Center gallery in those respective years. The gallery recently reopened in its new permanent location, also on the first floor of City Hall.

"Now that the exhibit has its new location, we're already planning to expand it for next year," said Caruso. "We have quite a few ideas."

For these train enthusiasts, the project is clearly much more than a holiday display. It's a labor of love.

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