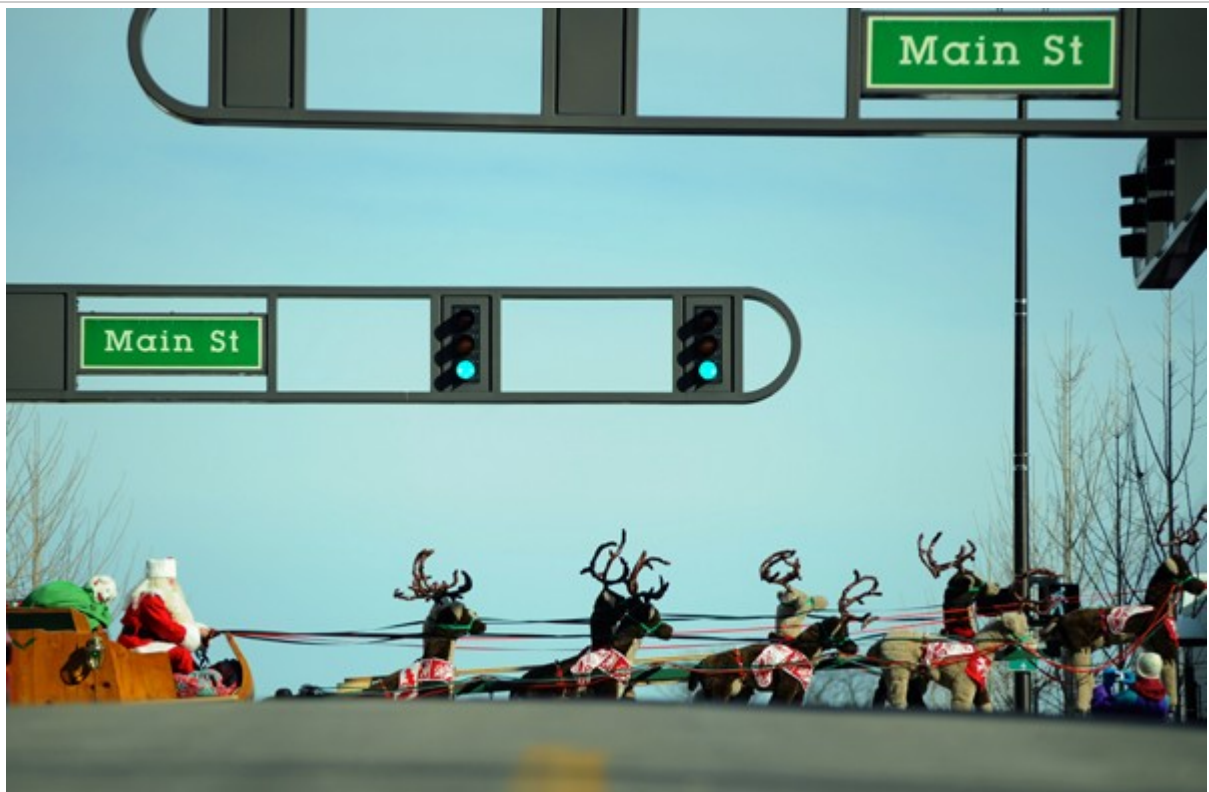


## Local News

### Santa Claus on parade



Daily News/ BRIANA SCROGGINS The Midland Santa Holiday Parade closed with Santa and his reindeer waving hello and goodbye to everyone. The Santa Holiday Parade started at Midland High School and ended on Main St. in Midland, on Saturday afternoon.

#### *Float makers tout big jobs for their time in the sun*

**By Cheryl Wade  
of the Daily News**

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For Mary Bassett and her float crew, 100 volunteer hours were rewarded with two hours in the sun, being watched by thousands at Saturday's Santa Holiday parade in Midland.

Crowds lined up along the parade route, which began at Midland High School and ended at a reviewing stand on Main Street downtown. Some sat on the ground despite cold temperatures. For the people who made, rode on or walked behind the 110 floats, their moments in the sun were real, and that bright sunshine made the cold seem less abrasive.

Animals in the parade included lots of dogs, a few horses and alpacas from Varner's Alpaca Links, a local farm.

Bassett helped lead a crew of volunteers from the Catholic community to put together a float that ended up winning honors from grand marshal Gary Williams.

"At the time we were feeling particularly unorganized and we were all over the place, but they still saw our talent," she said.

Creating a float and keeping 50 or 60 children — many of them dressed as angels — in place was a challenge, she said. Some had to leave during the festivities for basketball team pictures. Most of the children walked but, when they grew tired, they took turns sitting on the float.

Who could imagine what a labor this float was? It featured a handmade tree of garland, children dressed as presents and a banner reading "God's greatest gifts?" the huge, old-fashioned star for the top of the tree is very

heavy, is bolted to a pole and somehow has to be affixed to the float, Bassett said. This year, the crew has Gerace Construction co. to thank for making the job easier. The company provided a place to assemble the float and provided "some sort of a fork lift" to make sure the star was attached in the right place.

Passing out the praise, Bassett didn't leave out the older children, who agreed to wear boxes covered with shiny foil paper and that "had to be taped really tight."

"I'm proud to say we had teenage boys in there, too, even a 21-year-old," she said.

Other floats, too, showed the ingenuity of their creators. The Chemical Bank float had mittens on the sides, touting its "Mittens for Michigan" campaign. Gina Beebe enlisted students from her dance studio to perform a drumstick pattern while sitting on the float or to twirl as they followed it. They won best of show. Members of the Midland Gymnastics Club did handstands and other capers while riding on the trailer. A cute Valley Plaza Resort float had gingerbread boys and candy canes in the windows.

"We spent probably about a month getting ready," Beebe said. A big part of the job was assembling costumes — many of them sewn instead of bought — for the characters in "Peter Pan."

Students had auditions during the week and were given parts based on their dancing and acting ability, Beebe said. They will keep their parts through spring, when they will perform the ballet.

Spectators near the RE/MAX float got a blast of hot air from four burners used to inflate balloons — the kind that carry passengers in baskets. The company sponsors a balloon festival each year.

"It was a nice shot of warm air," said owner/broker Wayne Crosby. People "kept saying 'Burn the burners. We saw you coming.' People were taking pictures."

The Midland Figure Skating Club won the community organization award for a float with a tree in the middle hung with rental skates. The club, with a number of its young skaters walking, was back after several years away from the parade, said its president, Duane Boswell.

"They had a blast," he said. "It felt great to be part of that whole event again."

Reporter Cheryl Wade may be reached at [cwade@mdn.net](mailto:cwade@mdn.net) or (989) 839-4272.

#### **Award Winners**

**Grand Marshal Award - The Local Catholic Community**

**Best of Show Award - Gina Beebe's Dance Studio**

**Originality Award - Salvation Army**

**Religious Group Award - Homer United Methodist Church**

**Merchant Award - Apothecary Shoppe**

**Corporate Award - Chemical Bank**

**Community Organization Award - Midland Figure Skating Club**