

Christmas festival  
back in town

# Spirit squad

Alex Browne  
Arts Reporter

It's official. Christmas is coming to the Peninsula starting tomorrow (Nov. 27) – with a host of family-friendly activities, entertainment, arts and crafts and events to take the edge off the winter chill and build the excitement and spirit of the season.

Christmas on the Peninsula 2010 – following on the success of last year's inaugural event – is once more focused on uptown White Rock from Five Corners to the White Rock Community Centre at Miramar Village Plaza.

And it bids fair to be, as organizer Liv Butow has long promised, even bigger and better this year.

Contingency plans for cold temperatures and inclement weather during the day-long festival include a larger tented area outside the community centre, in addition to the indoor events there, plus a fine-tuned shuttle bus schedule to take participants to all associated events and venues.

Butow, a Christmas enthusiast since she was a young girl in Moss, Norway (just south of Oslo), has been pretty much a one-woman show in getting the event, inspired by old-world Christmas festivals, off the ground.

But she says she's now feeling the benefit of additional help and growing momentum among churches, businesses and other organizations in the community.

"Last year we counted 40 groups on board, and this year we have



Tam O' Shanter Dancers (from left) Paul and Janice Lowe, Cheryl Jorgensen, Maureen Lyon, Linda Forman and Stella MacKenzie volunteered at last year's inaugural Christmas on the Peninsula event, while (Below) Esther Wegner, 19, (bottom right) sings Christmas song with the Peace Portal Choir.

Submitted photo

over 50 organizations getting involved," she said.

"Now we're at the point that people are coming to us wanting to be part of it."

The imagination and enthusiasm of other individuals and groups will only add to the big picture and help the event grow stronger and more interesting for years to come, she said.

"The city has been great; White Rock Leisure Services has been great in helping with everything," she added.

Such co-operation is also a community-builder, she added – which should work just as well at Christmastime as during the Spirit of the Sea celebrations each summer.

"You need festivals in this day when everyone is so focused on their day-to-day business – that is where you meet people, and that is where you come together as a community."

Helping raise the visual profile of Christmas on the Peninsula this year will be a series of star-shaped light arrangements on lamp posts along Johnston Road, sponsored by the White Rock Business Improvement Association, plus boughs of holly.

But Butow said participants and spectators can expect an increase in the number of volunteers in Victorian-style costume, including roving groups of Christmas carolers on Johnston Road.

A number of celebrities are also involved, including children's favourite Thomas The Tank Engine, Mayor Catherine Ferguson, The Tam O' Shanter Dancers, and the Crescent Beach Pipe Band, all of whom will be joining the procession – following the traditional Biblical figures of Mary and Joseph and donkey – on a circuit around the Miramar Village – Russell Avenue area at 4:15 p.m.

"The candlelight procession from last year is turning into mini-parade," Butow said.



File photo

Sam Wharton, last year's towncrier, will be back at the community centre, adding his stentorian tones as master of ceremonies, while White Rock-Surrey MLA Gordon Hogg will continue his gingerbread man workshop duties and MP