

# Cohoes gives season blustery kickoff

By Shawn Charniga

The Record

**COHOES** — The weather outside, while not exactly frightful, was definitely on the blustery side, but it had no effect on the warm mood of pre-holiday revelry centered around the city's Heritage Area Visitors Center on Remsen Street Saturday.

Between pictures with Santa, hay rides, ogling the supersized Christmas decorations and, later, the lighting of the city's tree by Mayor John McDonald, there was plenty to do and plenty of motion to help keep warm. The daylong event was organized by the Cohoes Caretakers.

Linda Tremblay, the group's president, described their origin and ongoing efforts in the Visitors Center, which fills the first floor of 58 Remsen St., downstairs from the 1874 Cohoes Music Hall.

"We're a volunteer organization. A group of us were members of the city's 125th anniversary celebration back in 1995. The then-mayor wanted us to create some events to celebrate the history of the area," she said. These events included concerts throughout the summer, fireworks and a tree lighting. But when the year was over, committee members asked themselves, "why stop?"

"It's our kickoff to the holidays for the community," Tremblay said. "We always have a lot of fun with it." The event also gave the community the chance to see facets of their home city they might not ordinarily be

exposed to.

Their work continues throughout the year, primarily in the form of fund-raisers that add one new holiday piece to the Canal Square display each year. This year's addition is a large gingerbread house, in which a Santa statue and a revolving Christmas tree stand. The tree's decorations were made by Cohoes elementary school students.

The schedule kicked off at noon with photo sessions with Saint Nick, hayrides around the city until and collection of new toys for needy kids by city firefighters. Tremblay said the Santa shots would be developed during a late-afternoon lull, allowing parents to pick them up before the tree was lit at 7:05 p.m.

The jolly old elf was set to arrive on a fire truck, greeted by carolers and the mayor, who flipped the switch and officially greeted the festive season. The tree, 18-foot tall if it was an inch, glowed brightly in the square as did several smaller artificial trees.

Later, upstairs in the music hall, more carols were sung, young actors performed as did older peers and talented dancers.

Neil Powers, a city resident who brought sons Noah, 3, and Anthony, 11 months, said the family event was better this year than in the past.

"It's a good thing for the kids that they do each year, a good thing for the families and community," Powers said.



Susan B. Cummings photo  
Volunteers Nathaniel Joy, left, and Jaime Sticklemyer help to finish the Cohoes Holiday Display Saturday at Canal Square. A daylong festival featuring pictures with Santa Claus, hay rides and other events culminated with a tree-lighting ceremony.