

*Christmas Star at Frisco Main Fire Station
photo by Chris Frütchie*



Cherishing Holiday Traditions in Frisco

By DeAnn Daley Holcomb

AT THE FRISCO MAIN Fire Station you can look out the office window of Fire Chief Mack Borchardt and see one of the original trees that was a part of Frisco's early holiday tree-lighting event that began in the late '80s. Mr. Borchardt was the fire chief when it all started. Now known as "Merry Main Street," thousands are expected to come to Simpson Plaza at City Hall this year and enjoy the tree-lighting ceremony, eat good food, listen to holiday music and

wait for Santa Claus to arrive. It was just 20 years ago the original event was held in the old fire station on Main Street with a handful of local folks in attendance.

"We hosted the first Christmas event in the day room in the old Central Fire Station and the room was about 25 by 30 feet with five booths," said Chief Borchardt. The next year we moved into the apparatus bay where the fire trucks are kept and it grew from there until after a few years at the fire station

it moved downtown, closer to City Hall and then eventually it became 'Merry Main Street.' It is now held in the new City Hall plaza."

Hosted by the City of Frisco, the holiday tree-lighting event began with a tree garnished with lights; snacks consisted of donated punch and cookies from local organizations like the Frisco Garden Club. Always held the first Saturday in December, this year's holiday celebration on December 6 includes the combined efforts of the City of Frisco, local businesses and non-profit organizations along with the Frisco Independent School District. The evening will be filled with crafts, food booths, horse-drawn carriage rides, ice sculptures, a kids' holiday store and of course a visit from Santa Claus. Musical entertainment will be provided by all the Frisco elementary school choirs. More than 20,000 people came to the event last year and the number is expected to increase for this year's celebration. The centerpiece of the evening: a 30-foot-tall Christmas tree decked out with more than 21,000 lights.

Marcy Jones, Frisco Recreation Services Manager has overseen Merry Main Street since 1998 when she went to work for the city.

"This year we will continue hosting our gingerbread contest and there will be a model railroad train display," Ms. Jones said. "The attendance for this event increases every year. People come out to kick off the holiday season and Frisco residents, being the community that it is, show up for events like this and support it. It is a family-oriented town and residents are very active in the community, not only embracing Merry Main Street but all events."

Ms. Jones adds, "The school district organizes the music so that all of the Frisco Elementary School choirs participate in the event. When you have



Christmas shines at Frisco Square

photo by Chris Fritchie

that many children performing on three different stages throughout Simpson Plaza, you have parents, friends and grandparents attend. It just continues to grow.”

Ms. Jones said this year the City decided to begin the event at 5 p.m. instead of 6.

“Santa Claus will arrive around 5 p.m. on one of the Frisco Fire Department fire trucks. We will have choirs singing on three different stages. Santa will visit with the kids, then around 6 p.m. the emcees will announce the gathering around the tree and Mayor Maher Maso, along with city council members and everyone in the audience, will count down and, keeping with tradition, Mayor Maso will light the tree,” Ms. Jones said. “Then the music will start up again on the stages and our family activities will continue.”

Chief Borchardt said that although the fire station may not host the event anymore, it remains a part of the event.

“We always hang Christmas lights on the fire station building. When they turn the Christmas tree lights on down at

city hall, the folks on the radio call the fire station and we turn the lights on here trying to synchronize our lights at the same time,” Chief Borchardt said. “It was held at the Fire Department in the beginning because we had the most space, a convenient spot and we were happy to host it.”

CHRISTMAS IN THE SQUARE – A SIGNATURE DESTINATION EVENT

Frisco doesn’t stop there. If you are looking for more holiday razzle dazzle, come celebrate at the third annual Christmas in the Square at Frisco Square. It is a month-long celebration that kicks off with the largest choreographed holiday lights and music show in Texas. The display incorporates more than 150,000 lights synchronized to holiday tunes and is the work of Frisco resident Jeff Trykoski.

More than 450,000 people are expected to come see the show and enjoy family-oriented activities during December according to Bob Shaver, Senior Vice President of Marketing and Community Relations for Frisco Square

Development.

“This is our third year hosting Christmas in the Square. It started with the appreciation of the work that Jeff did and the light display he had at his home. We contacted him and asked if he would be interested in trying something even bigger with a commercial contract. Jeff liked the challenge, so we have worked with him each of these three years,” said Mr. Shaver. “We started with the idea of a lights and music show in Frisco Square and we added what we thought were family-friendly activities like bounce houses and slides on weekends to compliment the lights and music show.”

“We have so many organizations in the community involved - from Frisco Family Services, to our local sponsors (principally EDS Credit Union, the “Presenting Sponsor”), to the vendors in Santa’s Gift Shop,” said Cathy Sweeney, a managing partner at Frisco Square. “We really try to pull in as many aspects of the Frisco community as we can, and, combined with the City’s sponsorship of Merry Main Street, we know that it has become one of the premiere Christmas



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light shows in Texas. Visitors come from all over North Texas and we've learned that several bus tours will be traveling from out of state this year to see the show and visit the area."

We had expected 150,000 people and ended up with 325,000 people! This year we added new lighting effects, features and activities.

The enormous popularity of the event caught Frisco Square by surprise, according to Mr. Shaver.

"The first year we did very little advertising and we only had two sponsors. At the conclusion, we estimated that we had 80,000 people come. We were impressed," Mr. Shaver said.

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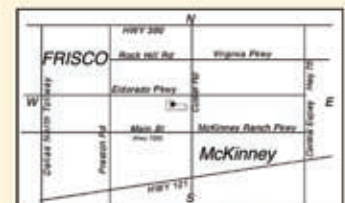
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Failed Low Back Surgery?

I had surgery in my lower back, however the pain had returned and was worse than ever. I am an RN and actually stopped working. The pain kept me from wanting to do any activities. I am almost 100% pain-free.

Donna Conatser, Registered Nurse, Frisco, TX

Sciatica?

My whole life had come to a halt from my normal routine. Walking was almost impossible and therefore every aspect of life was impacted. After treatments, my life has returned to normal. Dr. Kaff's use of the stretching table allowed my discs to shrink back and took the pressure off the nerve.

Douglas Damewood, Plano ISD Administrator

Herniated or Bulging Disc?

I had lower back pain around the hip area. It hurt to walk, sit or stand. Every time that I would roll on my side, I would wake up. The progress seemed to take a very short amount of time. Every time that I went back in it felt better.

Scott Rackers, D.R. Horton, McKinney, TX



Safety Town glitters bright for Christmas

photo by Chris Fritchie

“We had expected 150,000 people and ended up with 325,000 people! This year we added new lighting effects and new buildings, new features and activities. We expect continued growth with more sponsors and more support from the community.”

The 2008 Christmas in the Square opened November 28 with Santa Claus parachuting onto the lawn in front of the George Purefoy Municipal Center. The extravaganza continues every evening except Saturday, December 6, when the community comes together for Merry Main Street. The holiday activities resume the next night and continue through December 20. The light and music show will go through January 1, 2009.

Another crowd favorite at Christmas in the Square, Santa’s Gift Shop, opens December 12. Due to its popularity, the shop has been moved to a 6,000 square-foot lighted and heated tent with 28 holiday vendors. Frisco Family Services will run the gift shop and receive a portion of the proceeds to help area families.

“We focused a lot on additions to

the light show this year, with two new buildings in the Square,” Ms. Sweeney said. “We’ll have a new twist that we call ‘Leaping Lights!’ down the median, and I expect most people will just love that. We’ll have Adventure Railroad for the children, and for the adults, we have many new restaurants - Sake Toro, Mattito’s, Lochrann’s, Go Go Burger and Josephine’s Italian Bistro. Our newest tenants - Firehouse Subs and Love, Peace Popcorn - can’t wait to get involved in the festivities. Each of the tenants is finding their own unique ways to participate along the sidewalks.”

Ms. Sweeney adds, “We’d love to find a major sponsor to help us bring an outdoor skating rink to the mix next year, with the proceeds benefiting a sponsored charity. Wouldn’t it be great to have a skating rink every night, regardless of the weather? Our goal is to add to the light show each year - we know Jeff Trykoski will find something to wow us again!”

CHRISTMAS SALUTE TO FRISCO’S MAIN STREET

The Main Street Merchants Association in

partnership with the Heritage Association of Frisco will host its inaugural Holidays in Old Town on Saturday, December 13; keeping with the tradition of Main Street and its merchants being a driving force in Frisco’s holiday events.

“We want to remind everyone that Main Street has a great atmosphere, a people-friendly area with some wonderful shops and merchants. We want everyone to come down and be a part of the Christmas event on Main Street,” said Charles Haley, president of the Historic Downtown Main Street Merchant Association and owner of Frisco Automotive. “We are doing this in cooperation with the Heritage Association of Frisco. It will feature the Frisco Heritage Association’s Historic Home Tour from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and activities for the family sponsored by the Main Street Merchants.” Tickets to the Historic Home tour are \$10.

Other events planned for Holidays in Old Town include a vintage car show at Frisco Automotive, gingerbread houses at Raising the Barre and an art show and sale sponsored by the Visual Arts Guild

*Volunteers at Destiny's Place Ministries (above);
Fireman clowns entertain the crowd
at Merry Main Street (below)
photos provided by Janet Maccubbin*

of Frisco and the Frisco Arts Association. Other family-fun activities involve decorating holiday cards at Ski Frisco Sports to send to the troops, the Mad Hatter decorating hats at Jump, Jive and Wail Hair Salon. Horse Hardware will feature horseshoe decorating while the Blue Door Boutique will offer a chance to decorate cookies. The Frisco Garden Club will host a bird feeder-making event and will distribute hot chocolate in conjunction with Randy's Steakhouse. Frisco Family Services will sponsor a spot for youngsters to make reindeer food. Thanks to Voyager Insurance, kids can have their pictures made with Santa and then have their faces painted courtesy of Ed Forster State Farm Insurance.

NO LONGER THE FORGOTTEN CHRISTMAS STAR, A TRADITION IS REBORN

If you're a native of Frisco or have lived in Frisco for a while, you may remember the 50-plus year old "star of lights" holiday decoration. The star has returned to its home and a Frisco Fire Department tradition has been renewed.

I remember as kid seeing the star being put on top of the water tower... the firemen would climb the water tower and hang the star. It was quite a job.

The holiday star was originally created by Bill Thompson and William May who worked for a power plant. Mr. May was also a Frisco volunteer fireman.

"I remember as a young kid seeing the star being put on top of the water tower by the Abbey restaurant off Main Street," Chief Borchardt said. "On the east side



of the water tower is a red brick building that was the old fire station. Right behind the fire station was where the water tower was and the firemen would pick up the star, climb the water tower and hang the star. It was quite a job to do."

For ten years the star was displayed on the water tower, then the tradition was moved to the Frisco Volunteer Fire Department located not far from the tower on 7th Street. For several years it remained a Frisco holiday tradition until the star lost its luster.

Frisco history buff Rusty McSpadden

volunteered to refurbish the star and now it is back where it belongs – hanging atop the Frisco Central Fire Station tower.

If you had any doubt that Christmas is just around the corner, you need only look at Frisco's December landscape. From the old Merry Main Street to the more recent Christmas in the Square to the brand new Holidays in Old Town, it's clear that Frisco is welcoming the season in style. You might say in "Frisco STYLE."

DeAnn Daley Holcomb is a published author and freelance writer who lives in Plano.