

GREENFIELD



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

Santa Claus and Greenfield Mayor Roxann Wedegartner led the tree lighting countdown at Veterans Mall on Friday night, kicking off the weekend's Jinglefest activities.

'Creating fun for families'

Jinglefest attracts visitors downtown with array of activities

By **BELLA LEVAVI**
Staff Writer

GREENFIELD — Between visits with Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and the Grinch, arts and crafts activities, musical entertainment and more, visitors to the city's downtown had a lot to experience as part of the weekend's annual Jinglefest celebration.

Jinglefest, organized by the Greenfield Business Association, aims to get families downtown by

providing an array of activities at local businesses. The Greenfield Recreation Department, meanwhile, organized "The Amazing Race: Jinglefest Edition," a series of challenges that added to Saturday's festivities.

"It's an opportunity to have fun downtown in Greenfield," said Recreation Department Director Christy Moore. "The Rec Department is all about creating fun for families."

Some of the activities along Main Street included a visit with the Grinch at Franklin County's YMCA, a free musical performance by Strings for Kids and children's craft activities with



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

The Twice As Smart choir sings holiday songs at Veterans Mall in Greenfield on Friday night.

SEE JINGLEFEST A8

Jinglefest attracts visitors downtown

JINGLEFEST FROM A1

Mrs. Claus at The LAVA Center.

As customers shopped the wares of local artists and vendors at The LAVA Center, or viewed the community art show or climate change-focused photography exhibit, children were able to make Christmas cards and ornaments with Mrs. Claus, as well as join her for story hour.

"It's a great thing to give families things to do and spend some time downtown," said LAVA Center volunteer Jovonna Van Pelt, who dressed as Mrs. Claus. When Van Pelt isn't portraying a holiday icon, she spends her time at the center helping with humanities programming, including poetry readings and writing drop-in hours.

"This is a great activity for the kids while parents can do some shopping," she added. "It's a little something for everybody."

One of the main events at Jinglefest is The Amazing Race. The game — based on the CBS TV series, "The Amazing Race" — involves teams reading clues or completing tasks before moving onto a new location. This was the second year the game took place as part of Jinglefest.

Ten competing teams worked to finish the challenges as quickly as possible. The game provides rid-

dles for the teams to decipher, sending them to certain businesses where they complete challenges to advance.

For example, one clue read, "Visit a place with a big screen, where classics like 'The Grinch' and 'A Wonderful Life' can be seen. Here will be your next challenge to attack, but don't worry, one part involves a buttery snack." Once at the Garden Cinemas, contestants made a garland out of popcorn and cranberries.

Teams included a group of students from Stoneleigh-Burnham School, a group from the Rec Room (an after-school drop-in program provided by the Greenfield Recreation Department) and more.

Another Jinglefest stop invited families to the Franklin Community Co-op's Community Room to make tie-dye snowflakes out of coffee filters and food coloring while sipping on free hot chocolate. Gift wrapping was also available for people doing their holiday shopping on Main Street.

"It is a fun way to get people out and able to know the things we do in Greenfield," said Franklin Community Co-op Marketing Coordinator Jenna Robinson. "It is very exciting to be able to do this and be part of it."

*Reach Bella Levavi
at 413-930-4579 or
blevavi@recorder.com.*



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Jovonna Van Pelt as Mrs. Claus and Greenfield residents Jonathan Doel, 7, and Elizabeth Doel, 2, make crafts at The LAVA Center on Saturday as part of Jinglefest.