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Two towns unite again for Christmas parade

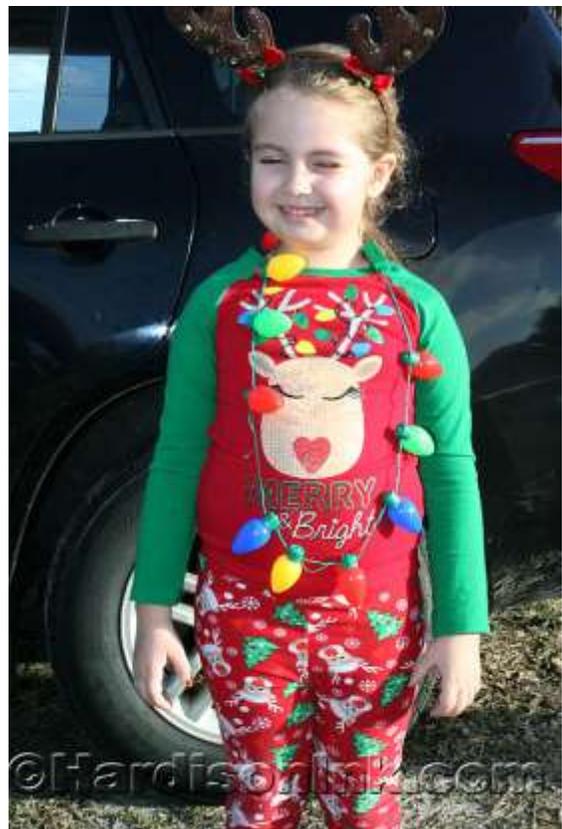


Yankeetown Mayor Jack Schofield and Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt wave as they arrive in downtown Yankeetown.

Story And Photos
By Terry Witt,
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For HardisonInk.com
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SOUTH LEVY COUNTY -- A Christmas parade that started in bright sunlight in Inglis and finished in Yankeetown as darkness began to envelop the tiny town became a major holiday event for residents of both towns Saturday (Dec. 15).

Emily Soper, 5, prepares for the parade with her own fashionable Christmas outfit.



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Jeff Bernstein representing the Withlacoochee Gulf Preserve rides as one of the more colorful figures in the parade.



A band performs on the Inglis-Yankeetown Lions Club float for parade spectators.

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Fire trucks lead the parade into downtown Yankeetown.



Children portray a Nativity scene on the First Baptist Church float.

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The Yankeetown School FFA appears to be having a good time on their float.



Yankeetown Mayor Jack Schofield and Town Administrator SherRi MacDonald stand beneath the historic cedar tree that was lighted when the parade ended.

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County Commissioner Lilly Rooks (at left) waves from the passenger side seat of a fire engine.

The 2018 Inglis and Yankeetown Christmas Parade wasn't the first joint parade by the two municipalities, but it has been years since they joined forces to produce this event.

Inglis has hosted the parade for many years, and Yankeetown

residents and elected officials always participated in the event. This year, it was decided the parade would take a longer route and pass through both towns on the way to its final destination in downtown Yankeetown.

Yankeetown Mayor Jack Schofield and Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt rode in the parade on the back seat of a classic convertible loaned to them by Citrus County car dealership owner Steve Lamb.

County Commissioner Lilly Rooks rode in a Levy County Fire Rescue fire engine.

The parade route passed beneath towering pines and oaks on Riverside Drive in Yankeetown. Hundreds of adults and children waited in the downtown area for the parade to arrive.

Yankeetown's small business district with its classy aging business buildings and small Town Hall near the banks of the Withlacoochee River looked like a scene from a Norman Rockwell painting as the parade came into sight.

Small children who had been busy on a playground next to Town Hall rushed to Riverside Drive when the emergency lights of fire trucks came into view. They gathered with their parents beneath massive pine trees to get a ringside seat along the narrow city street.

The United States Coast Guard quickly became one of the most popular attractions in the parade, when Coast Guard officers riding in a boat and trailer began handing out candy to children.

The Coast Guard has a station on Riverside Drive along the Withlacoochee River.

Sheri MacDonald, Yankeetown's town administrator and clerk, headed a parade committee that included representatives from both towns working together to make the parade a success.

After the parade ended, Yankeetown Mayor Schofield plugged in Christmas lights covering a giant cedar tree in downtown Yankeetown. The lighting of the tree was part of the planned festivities.

All of the lights on the trees were donated.

MacDonald said Linda and Wayne Harrington planted the cedar tree many years ago when they owned the Isaac Walton Lodge on the river across from Town Hall. Harrington is now a staff administrative assistant at Town Hall.

The tree was chosen for the lighting ceremony due to its central location in the

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downtown media of Riverside Drive and its historic significance.

A talented Cajun band paid for by the Inglis-Yankeetown Lions Club, performed in the pavilion next to Town Hall. The Blackwater Grill and Bar opposite Town Hall on the Withlacoochee served up chicken soup, beer and wine.