

Here's to a safe and merry 'Light Your Way' parade on Saturday

By SUE LOUGHLIN
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The Light Your Way Christmas Parade is expected to draw thousands of people to downtown Terre Haute on Saturday, and organizers outlined steps being taken to ensure it is an enjoyable and safe holiday event.

The parade, which will take place at 6 p.m. along Wabash Avenue, is the culminating event held in conjunction with the Miracle on 7th Street celebration. It is sponsored by Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

The parade will have 80 entries this year, said B.J. Riley, SMWC associate vice president for marketing.

One of the changes this year is that the parade route will be roped off in an effort to keep attendees, particularly small children, from running out into the street to collect candy.

Parade participants are being asked to hand out candy to parade-goers along the ropes/sidelines, as opposed to tossing the candy out, said Greg Ewing, SWMC director of public safety.

Riley, Ewing and others spoke at a news conference Thursday at The Woods.

The college will have nearly 100 faculty, staff and students working the parade on various details, he said.

"It's the holiday season. This is a time of joy. This is a time for children to see Santa



Tribune-Star file/Joseph C. Garza

The Vigo County School Corporation's entry for last year's Light Your Way Parade was a school bus decorated with a Grinch face on Dec. 2, 2023, on Wabash Avenue.

Claus," Ewing said. "We want to make sure this parade goes off without any problems, and everybody has fun and can enjoy the holiday season."

It's estimated that 15,000 or more people will attend.

The college works closely with the Terre Haute Police Department, Vigo County Emergency Management Agency and other agencies to ensure everyone's safety.

"There will be a large police presence," said Sgt. Justin Sears, Terre Haute police public information officer. "We want people to know they are safe when they come to Terre Haute."

Crowd control teams will be involved, and undercover officers will be walking among the crowd.

Some officers "you won't see," Sears said. "We'll be observing from about every-

where you could possibly think of."

THPD also will be in the parade this year as part of its Operation Save Christmas with the Grinch; the Grinch will have several police escorts.

"We're excited to be part of such a great parade like this," Sears said.

The Light Your Way Christmas parade is a little different than other parades, he said. "It's at night. There are a lot of lights and a lot of distractions. We truly want to be mindful of where our kids are at and where they are running"

Sears added, "We want everyone to enjoy the parade without incident."

The parade also serves as a culminating event for SMWC students taking an emergency management course, said Louis Reeves, a

college assistant professor of criminology.

Some of the class members will work in a Vigo County Emergency Management Agency incident command trailer monitoring crowd control and assisting with communications.

Other class members supervise volunteers involved with crowd control.

Students learn what it takes to handle a large scale event and the course also opens their eyes to various career possibilities, Reeves said.

Others assisting with public safety include the Terre Haute Fire Department as well as Indiana State University police and student volunteers.

The parade will begin at Fifth Street and Wabash Avenue and proceed east along Wabash to Ninth Street, where it will go north past Hulman Center, Riley said.

On Saturday, Wabash Avenue will be closed from Third Street to Ninth Street starting at 3 p.m. Also, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth streets will be closed from Ohio to Cherry Streets. Ninth Street will remain open until about 5:30 p.m., Riley said.

The event will be live-streamed on smwc.edu.

The parade is presented by Toyota of Terre Haute and Thompson's Honda.

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