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'Holiday Magic' delights locals in Orinda's downtown

By Sora O'Doherty



Free horse-drawn carriage rides were a highlight of this annual event on Dec. 9. Photo Sora O'Doherty

It was a quiet but bright holiday night on Dec. 9 for the "Holiday Magic at Orinda Theatre Square" event. Locals lined up to patiently wait for free rides on an elegant old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage, complete with bright carriage lantern and Christmas lights, which did a lazy loop of Moraga Way from Theatre Square to Northwood Drive and around the roundabout at Bryant Way. Traffic slid by with quiet respect, engines barely audible in the brisk evening air.

Along Moraga Way, families wandered, checking out the menus in the brightly decorated restaurants, deciding where to enjoy their evening meal. Inside Theatre Square, there was a gentle buzz as families walked about, meeting live cartoon characters for a chat and a photo. A vivid red furry Elmo from Sesame Street delighted the little ones, along with bright blue Chase from Paw Patrol. None of the children, who were grinning ear to ear, seemed frightened by the life-sized characters that enthusiastically posed for photos.

Further inside the Square, lovely Moana and Queen Elsa from the Bay Area Cinderella Company welcomed fans near the tall and beautifully adorned Christmas tree. They chatted with children about their favorite songs from the movies "Moana" and "Frozen," coming down to child level for the sincere exchanges among the lighted packages under the tree.

Elsewhere in Theatre Square, children were getting their faces painted and families were dining at the busy restaurants or window shopping, perhaps for holiday gifts. The merriment will continue at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21 with the free movie screening of the holiday classic "The Polar Express" in the 178-seat auditorium. For information about other events, visit www.orindatheatresquare.com.



Moana and Queen Elsa, from the Bay Area Cinderella Company, share a holiday moment with Valeria and Brent Tyndall, and their children, Juliana and Serena. Photo Sora O'Doherty

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