

Beginning to look a lot like Christmas

By **Justin Graeber** Enterprise Staff Writer Posted Nov 27, 2011 @ 01:00 AM Last update Nov 27, 2011 @ 01:23 PM
BROCKTON —

Spring-like weather Saturday brought out large, family-heavy crowds for the annual Downtown Brockton Holiday Parade Saturday. Some people were out to see the parade's big stars. "Hopefully we'll see Santa," said Jim Gardner, who was bringing his three kids to the parade for the first time.

Others, like Henry and Linda Rodrer, were out to see family members. Their son Andrew was in the West Middle School band. "We try to come every year," said Linda while staking out some prime seats on Legion Parkway. "It puts us in the holiday spirit." Still others come to see Brockton's finest in all their glory – like Jackie Baker, who said the police are her favorite part of the parade. "I just like the uniforms," she said.

Brockton center was home to several other events surrounding the parade, like crafts at the library, and a bazaar inside City Hall. New this year was a treasure hunt, in which people were given a map and told to pick up small "treasures" at 10 spots around downtown. "The idea was to link all of us together as a group," said Brenda Rodrigues, who came up with the idea. "It's something we've always missed. And the hunt seemed to be popular, as most areas quickly ran out of prizes. "It's crazy right now," said parade volunteer Glenna Angelo, handing out ornaments as part of the treasure hunt in Joe Angelo's Cafe, which also served as the headquarters for parade staff.

At the end of the parade, officials and residents gathered outside City Hall to recognize Edgar Award winner Kristina Lutz as well as the parade champions: The Kennedy School (float); South/Davis Middle School (band) and The Old Colony YMCA (marching/dancing group).

Although the parade was led by Grand Marshall John "The Quietman" Ruiz, two-time WBA World Heavyweight champion, there were two honorary marshals, Ugo Paparo and the family of the late John Dreystadt.

"I remember (John) coming home and saying, 'Why doesn't Brockton have a parade?'" said Dreystadt's widow, Sonnie. "He gave what he had, and he gave a lot," she said. "I know John is watching all of us – I feel it in my heart."

Mayor Linda Balzotti pointed out that this is the 25th anniversary of the parade. "What better way to use a warm day in November than to be out celebrating the holidays," she said. Balzotti said she's partial to the bands – particularly Brockton High School. Taylor Martin, 6, summed it all up when asked for her favorite part of the day. "Everything," she said.

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Marc Vasconcellos

Brian Jerrier, 11, Brockton, a musician in the Davis School band, plays in the 25th annual Downtown Brockton Holiday Parade on Saturday
