

Season's spirit

Holiday Tree Trail lights up Joplin's Mercy Park

BY **KIMBERLY BARKER**
 kbarker@joplinglobe.com

An hour after sunset Tuesday, 30 Christmas trees wrapped with hundreds of multicolored bulbs and ornaments illuminated Mercy Park with Joplin's Holiday Tree Trail that will be featured throughout December.

The Holiday Tree Trail is now on public display in Mercy Park, 3002 St. Johns Blvd., during park hours from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. through Dec. 31.

This will be the second year of Joplin's Holiday Tree Trail, which gives area businesses and organizations the opportunity to show off their holiday spirit by decorating Christmas trees. The \$25 fee to sponsor a tree will benefit future recreational programs offered by the city of Joplin.

The trees vary from one to the next. One sported a Charlie Brown theme, and another one followed the movie "The Nightmare Before Christmas."

The Joplin chapter of Tri-State Human Resources Association re-created the character Bumble, the Abominable Snowmonster of the North, from the 1964 television special "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." The all-white tree — outfitted with white holiday string lights — had legs, arms, teeth and large eyes fashioned from foam board and cotton balls.

Tri-State Human Resources Association is a nonprofit, individual membership association for human resource professionals. The Joplin chapter meets at the library once a

SEE **PARK. 2A**



Santa's reindeer are reflected in the pond during the kickoff for the annual Holiday Tree Trail on Tuesday night at Mercy Park in Joplin. The event included 30 decorated trees, food trucks and visits with Santa.

GLOBE | LAURIE SISK

PARK

FROM 1A

month and offers webinars, support, networking, information and professional development in human resources.

Erin Boudreaux, secretary of the Joplin chapter, said this is its second year participating in the Holiday Tree Trail and that the group received nothing but positive reactions opening night.

Amber Nichelson, area supervisor of South Joplin Head Start, said that group's tree was decorated by not only staff but also by children who added their own artistic flair. The green tree featured white string lights, red ribbon, letters and ornaments.

This is Head Start's first year participating in the Holiday Tree Trail.

"The children made ornaments out of popsicle sticks and stars," Nichelson said. "Staff did some ornaments just showing what our program provides, like health, safety and education."

TRAIL'S CREATION

Jessica Johnson, recreation coordinator with the Joplin Parks and Recreation Department, said the Holiday Tree Trail was cre-



Dancers from Karen's Dance Studio perform during the kickoff for the annual Holiday Tree Trail on Tuesday night at Mercy Park.

GLOBE | LAURIE SISK

Family event

THE JOPLIN PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT will also host a family event from 6 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 18, in Mercy Park. The Holiday Tree Trail Family Night will feature Santa Claus, refreshments, a candy cane scavenger hunt and a movie in the park.

ated with the goal of getting more people outdoors and using the city's park systems during the pandemic.

"We modeled it after another parks and rec agency that we had seen, and we loved the idea," she said. "We put our own spin on it. We wanted a way to get people active out in our parks and what better way than to go see beautiful trees in a beautiful park. The inaugural year, we had 20 trees."

Johnson said she hopes the new tradition continues to grow year after year. Tuesday night's festivities included free hot cocoa,

cookies, a performance by students at Karen's Dance Studio, a StoryWalk sponsored by the Joplin Public Library, a visit from Kris Kringle and a toy drive for Joplin Area Firefighters Christmas for Kids program.

Sisters-in-law Amanda and Megan Brand, of Joplin, waited in line with their children, Kenadi, 5, and Elijah, 4, to take pictures with Santa after viewing the holiday lights.

"I liked the Chiefs tree," Kenadi said.

Elijah couldn't help but disagree.

"I liked the monster," he said.

The two youngsters held hands and said they were going to ask Kriss Kringle for a food set for things like tea parties.

"Kenadi's a dancer at Karen's Dance Studio, so we wanted to watch the big girls," Amanda Brand said. "And then of course, we wanted to see Santa and get in the Christmas spirit ear-

ly. We're ready for it."

The Brand family said they enjoyed the holiday lights as well as the 55-degree weather. It was also their first Christmas event of the year.

"It's nice to be able to do this around the Joplin area, and it's good for the community because we're all together," Megan Brand said.

Guests also registered for the second annual Roll-n-Stroll Activity Challenge hosted by the Joplin Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with Mercy Hospital Joplin. The event coincides with the Holiday Tree Trail where it encourages the community to skate, walk or run their way into the new year by staying active.

"We were excited to be able to participate, and it's a communitywide effort," said Michael Herr, vice president of operations at Mercy Joplin.

There is no cost to participate, and the first 200 registered participants to turn in their activity tracker will receive a free knit beanie, courtesy of Mercy. Registration for the challenge is required at www.joplinparks.org or by calling 417-625-4750.

For information, visit the 2021 Roll-n-Stroll Activity Challenge event on Facebook.