

Countdown to Christmas

Whether you were in Dallas, Independence or Monmouth, the countdown to Christmas began in style



Photos by Jolene Guzman and Emily Mentzer

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POLK COUNTY — Santa Claus is always a busy man this time of year, but managed to take time out to visit Polk County communities Friday and Saturday.

Celebrations in Dallas, Falls City, Independence and Monmouth annually kick off the holiday season during the first week-

end in December.

The rain held off for the festivities, which included hot cocoa, lights, gifts, crafts and parades in Monmouth and Independence.

From top to bottom, left to right:

A band plays Christmas tunes at Dallas Winterfest on Friday, entertaining hundreds of kids — and their families — while waiting to talk to the big man, Santa.

Santa Claus arrives on a Dallas Fire Department fire engine to

light the tree in the Polk County Courthouse Square on Friday.

Western Oregon University's Wolfie greets children at the Werner University Center on Friday night. The mascot offers a "fist-bump" to a group of kids before they get in line to see Santa.

Santa arrives by Portland & Western train to the Independence Cinema on Saturday afternoon to greet kids and their families, hear wishes and give away presents.

Dakota Baker, 3, poses with Santa at Dallas Winterfest. Santa listens intently as Dakota tells him what she wants for Christmas.

Brooklyn Avila carefully sprays whipped cream on hot chocolate at the Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce booth at Winterfest on Friday.

WOU's 128-year-old Sequoia tree is lit up for the Christmas season before hundreds file into the Werner University Center to

enjoy crafts, cocoa, music and visits with Santa.

A young child approaches Santa to tell him her Christmas wishes.

Avery Lemmon, 4, and sister Zoe Lemmon, 2, wait to grab a hot dog for lunch at Independence Cinema after having told Santa what they want.

Zoe carries a stuffed Sponge Bob Squarepants, a free gift to all who visited the Santa Train this year.