

# A Downey Christmas

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## Downey Chamber of Commerce

presents

## Christmas of Service

On December 1st the Downey Chamber of Commerce will once again present the 68th Annual Downey Christmas Parade. This year the theme of the parade is a Christmas of Serving! Grand Marshals for the event are all wonderful examples of Downey Citizens that work tirelessly behind the scenes to promote their organizations and the City of Downey. This year's Grand Marshals are Stacy Brabant of the Assistance League of Downey, David Gafin of Kiwanis and Downey Chamber of Commerce, George and Carrie Redfox of the Downey Historical Society and Rose Float Association, and Carol Rowland of Keep Downey Beautiful.

Thank you to our wonderful Title Sponsor, Financial Partners Credit Union without your generous support, the Chamber would not be able to put on this important City Tradition. Other amazing sponsor include Nova Storage, Crimson Coward, Pacific Western Bank, Gloria's Cocina Mexicana, Downey As-

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Step off is at 1 p.m. and our line-up includes State and City dignitaries, equestrian units, marching bands, dance teams, cheerleaders, the new Miss Downey and her Courts, a preview of Downey's entry in this year's Rose Parade, and of course Santa Claus (I hear Mrs. Claus may make an appearance). Truly something for everyone!!



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## Grand Marshall, Stacy Brabant

Stacy Brabant is one of those volunteers who does so much behind the scenes – out of the limelight – you wouldn't know what to do if they ever stepped away.

Downey is fortunate Stacy has never stepped away.

Born and raised in Lakewood, Stacy found her way to Downey after marrying her husband, Don, in 1989. Together they raised five children: Garrett, Kate, Drew, Chandler and Emery.

Stacy wasn't one to sit on the sidelines. She became a team parent for Northwest Downey Little League and the AYSO. Her kids attended Rio Hondo Elementary, Griffiths Middle School and Warren High School, and Stacy was quick to join the PTA.

From 1990 to 2007, Stacy held several positions in PTA, including carnival chairperson and later president.

She'd go on to serve as director of the PTA HELPS food bank for seven years. This often meant loading her SUV with groceries, preparing Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, and coordinating with schools for their holiday food drives. There was also the less glamorous part of the job, which was preparing all the paperwork involved with serving the food bank's clients.

Stacy belonged to the San Antonio Guild of

Children's Hospital for 22 years, holding the office of president for many years. One of the group's most prominent fundraisers was their holiday home tours in Downey, which Stacy helped organize.

Since 1994, Stacy has belonged to the Assistance League of Downey, an organization Stacy remains active with today. She is the advisor to the ASSISTEENS, the Assistance League's youth auxiliary for high school girls. The group does lots of volunteer work in the Downey community, including giving away gowns and tuxedos during prom and winter formal season to students who otherwise couldn't afford to dress up.

Stacy is past chairman of the Gypsy Johnson Auxiliary and is currently its buildings and properties chairman and in charge of Downey's historical landmark Casa de Parley Johnson. You can also find Stacy volunteering at the Second Tyme Around Thrift Shop in downtown Downey.

Believe it or not, Stacy still has spare time, which she spends working out, crocheting, and spending time with family in Lake Havasu. She's also a dedicated grandma to Jaxson, age 3.

In 2008, the Downey Unified School District chose two women as their Volunteers of the Year. The first recipient was Stacy and the other was the legendary Dr. Mary Stauffer.



### Favorite Fun Facts

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE**  
"ELF"

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
"JINGLE BELLS"

"She is the epitome of service with a smile," Dr. Wendy Doty, superintendent of Downey Unified at the time, said in presenting the award. "There is no one more deserving of this honor than Stacy."

The following year, State Sen. Alan Lowenthal chose Stacy as a Woman of the Year for the 27th Senate District, an area that encompassed Downey and all the way south to Long Beach and Hawaiian Gardens.

"I enjoy it immensely," Stacy says about volunteering. "I have a blast with my friends."

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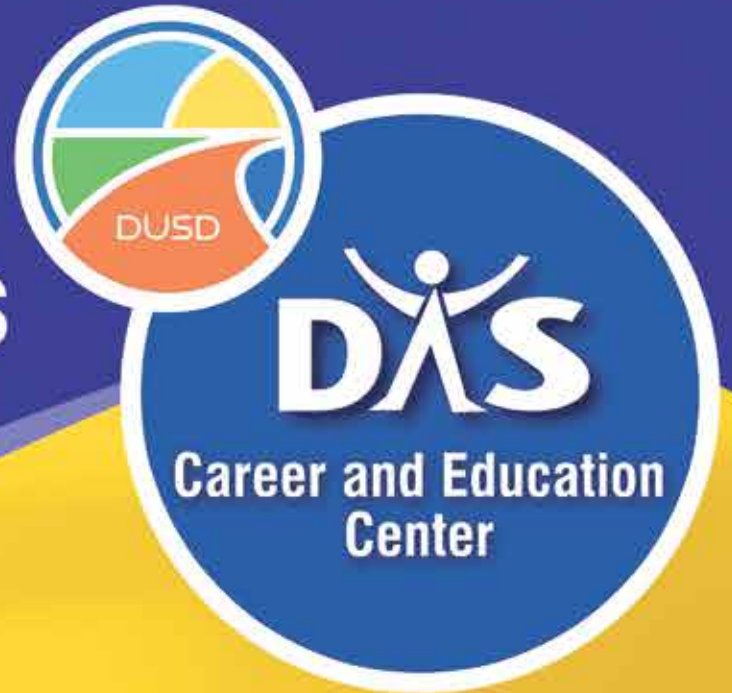
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## Grand Marshall, David Gafin

Whatever you do, don't call David Gafin a politician.

The retired Downey councilmember spent eight years behind the dais, including one year as mayor, before term limits ended his time at City Hall.

But as David sees it, his role on the council was just another way for him to give back to the community he calls home.

"I always thought, 'What's best?' Not for me or the city staff per se, but what's best for the whole community?" David said about his time as an elected official. "And if it went contrary to what people thought, and they couldn't explain it to me to change my mind, I didn't mind being on the bottom end of a vote. Politician? No, I never wanted to be one.

"When I got out of it after eight years, I had a few people come to me and say, 'Are you going to continue? Are young going to go to the Assembly?' I said no, this is as far as I ever want to go in politics. Now I actually feel like I'm helping somebody in my community rather than just a cog blocking the system."

David was only 6 when his family moved to Downey. He went through the Downey school system, attending Alameda and Gaudin elementary schools, Woodruff Junior High School, and Downey High School. He earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Accounting from Cerritos College (graduating with honors) and a bachelor's degree in Business Administration (with an emphasis in

accounting) from Cal State Fullerton. After a few years working for large accounting firms, he started his own practice and never looked back. He'd be self-employed for 33 years as a certified public accountant.

In the early 1980s, Don Dixon got David involved with the Downey Chamber of Commerce. And when you're an accountant by trade, all the local non-profits and service clubs inevitably will ask you to serve as treasurer. David usually obliged.

David enjoys volunteering but there was another reason for his initial plunge into community service: guilt.

The Vietnam War was going on and young men everywhere were being drafted into service. David's number was eventually called but before he was shipped overseas, President Nixon had started the process of bringing the troops home.

"There was a definite sense of guilt," David said. "But I figured if I couldn't serve my country by being drafted into the service, I could serve my country in this way, by volunteering in my community."

David won a seat on the Downey City Council in 2004 and immediately put his financial expertise to work, helping Downey grow its financial reserves. This would prove critically important in 2008 when the global financial crisis hit; Downey was able to weather the storm without extensive disruptions to local programs or service.



### Favorite Fun Facts

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE**  
"A CHRISTMAS STORY"

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
"FROSTY THE SNOWMAN"

Today, David is still active with various committees and organizations. Perhaps most importantly, he sits on the Measure S citizens bond oversight committee, ensuring that proceeds of the tax increase approved by Downey voters are properly spent.

He retired as an accountant in December 2017, trading his suit and tie for jeans and a sweatshirt, perfect attire for road trips up north with his wife, Brenda.

How is retirement going?

"It's going great," he says. "I recommend it for everyone."

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# Grand Marshall, Carol Rowland

If you closely enough, you can still see a glimmer of rock and roll in Carol Rowland's eyes.

With her nurturing demeanor and motherly disposition, it's difficult to put "Carol" and "rock and roll" in the same sentence, but indeed she had a life before discovering Downey. She was born in Detroit -- she won't say when and we won't ask -- and moved to California in 1974, taking a job with Capitol Records, the giant record label responsible for launching the careers of The Beatles, Neil Diamond, the Beach Boys, and other hall of famers.

Carol and her husband settled here in 1978, although admittedly they knew nothing about the community. Their decision to move to Downey was based solely on geography.

"How I discovered Downey is I worked in Glendale and my husband worked in Huntington Beach and we lived in North Hollywood," Carol said. "So we opened up a map and said, 'We need to be able to live in between,' and we looked and there's Downey."

"I don't know how many weekends we drove down here. I knew nothing about Downey, just that it was in between both of our jobs. I never left."

Carol worked for Capitol Records for 10 years, handling marketing and promotions for the West Coast, but her desire for a stable family life forced her to reconsider a career in entertainment.

"I just started to have kids and when you work in the record industry, if you have acts in town, you work from morning to night," Carol said. "When you have kids it really changes your focus."

Her oldest daughter started school at Ward Elementary and thus began Carol's prolific career in public service. She began volunteering as a popcorn salesperson under Bobbi Samperi, who was president of the PTA at

the time and later went on to become a school board member.

After her daughter was promoted from Ward to South Middle School, Carol noticed something she had never seen before in her south Downey neighborhood: gang members loitering outside the corner liquor store. In broad daylight.

"I talked to Linda Kennedy, who was my daughter's principal at the time. Linda says, 'You know, they're just starting to develop a program. It's called Gangs Out of Downey. I would suggest that you go there.'"

GOOD was still in its infancy stages, having been created by Downey educators and civic leaders in response to the growing gang epidemic of the early 1990s.

"So I go, and I don't know these people, and thank God I didn't know who they really were because I probably wouldn't have been so brave. But we just shared how frightened we were. Clayton Mays was the police chief at the time and we made such a big stink that he invited us to the council chambers to talk to us about our end of the city and what they were doing."

"Phil Presicci after that meeting walked me out to my car and he said to me, and I'll never forget this, 'It's easy to come and complain, but you need to get involved.' He really called me on the carpet. And you know, I attended almost every meeting since then."

Carol went on to serve every board position in GOOD, including two stints as president.

In 1994, at the urging of Councilwoman Joyce Lawrence, the city set out to hire a part-time coordinator to run Keep Downey Beautiful. Carol was hired for the position. She worked 20 hours per week and her office was located at Stonewood Center.



*Favorite Fun Facts*

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE**  
"ELF"

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
"I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS"

Carol's role has expanded over the years and she became more of a utility person for public works. She's also been instrumental in Downey's recycling programs.

But her most visible position remains as Keep Downey Beautiful coordinator, helping coordinate monthly clean-ups around the city that attract upwards of 100 volunteers.

When she rides in Sunday's Downey Christmas Parade as a grand marshal, she will be at an unusual vantage point. Usually she's at the tail end of the parade, behind Santa Claus, leading volunteers in picking up trash along the parade route.

"I don't think in my whole life I have had a recognition that has touched me more than this," Carol said. "Downey is really in my heart. I don't think there's a community quite like it."

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# Christmas of Service

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 Assemblywoman Cristina Garcia  
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 Girl Scout Troop 01173  
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DFCU  
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 Merengue "8" Ocho  
 Downey High School Cheer  
 Downey Dolphins  
 DUSD School Board (6 cars)  
 El Clasificado  
 Santa Fe Springs Dance Center  
 Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cheer  
 CYSC Allstars Cheerleading  
 Rancho Nieves (horses)  
 Downey Masonic Lodge 220  
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# Christmas of Service

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Downey Elks Lodge 202

The Olive Restobar

Alma Latina de Lynwood

Downey Youth Football Razorbacks

El Pescador

Warren Dance Team

Downey Sister City Association

Angeles por Siempre Unidos

Long Beach Recruiting Company

Downey Symphony Orchestra

Downey Sister Cities

Arc

Nissan-Banner

Estrellas Brillantes

TFL Fitness Center

Downey Council Parent Teacher's Association

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Calvary Chapel

Norwalk Troop 5281

Saint Raymond's School

Downey Elks

Danza Azteca

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# Grand Marshall, Carrie Redfox

Carrie Redfox remembers what it was like to be in middle school. The loneliness. The angst. The hiding in bathroom stalls to avoid everything and everyone.

"When I look at them, I see myself," says Carrie.

Carrie is in her 13th year as a sixth grade counselor at Doty Middle School, where she helps students navigate the awkward transition into high school and adulthood.

Middle school has never been easy but today's students are burdened with the added pressure of social media, where teens become content creators, competing for likes, comments and followers. It's a fantasy land of unrealistic expectations.

"I do a lot more social-emotional counseling than academic and when I started 13 years ago, it was just the opposite of that," Carrie says. "But now, just with the way of the world, and kids have phones and their apps, and that causes extra tension.

"Recently it's been a lot more of the social-emotional piece to my job. Dealing with kids that have genuine concerns and need to talk to somebody about it, need coping skills. And I love doing that. It's just the sad part of my job to know there are kids who are hurting so deeply."

In addition to making herself available to talk, Carrie has started several campus clubs to give students opportunities to make friends and work on their social skills. One club, My Place, meets Fridays and is open to all grade levels.

"It was created simply for that reason: so every student would have a place to call their own," Carrie said. "When I had lunch duty in the quad, I would see these kids wandering around alone. It

broke my heart.

"Or they would end up standing next to me because they wanted to be next to somebody. But I wanted it to be a peer, somebody they could forge a friendship with."

Carrie brought in board games her kids didn't play with anymore and a teacher offered use of her classroom.

"It just took off," said Carrie. "It's a club that gets a lot of visitors because it's safe. It's a beautiful thing to watch these kids interact with each other. That's how a lot of them make friends."

There are also after-school clubs and each day comes with a lesson and discussion.

"So there's just a lot of opportunities for the kids at Doty when it comes to the social aspect of things but then that's not going to administer to everybody," Carrie said. "There's always going to be those few kids who just don't feel like they fit and those are the ones that I work with and we talk about strategies and coping skills.

"I really struggled in middle school, specifically sixth grade. I wasn't ready for it. I was the one that walked around by myself. I would hide in bathroom stalls because I just didn't feel like I fit it. And I'm not going to have that for my kids."

How beloved is Carrie Redfox amongst her students?

She lives steps from Doty Middle School yet not once has her house been vandalized or her home life disturbed.

"I have a problem giving out my phone number way too often because I worry," she said. "So all



*Favorite Fun Facts*

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE**  
"MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET"

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
"WHITE CHRISTMAS"

sorts of people have my number but they've never abused it. People know where George and I live, and we've never had a problem," Carrie said.

"I think that's something that's amazing about Downey. To be able to grow up in the city in which you work, in which you live, and to have these kids know where you live and to respect that. It's the coolest thing."

Outside of work, Carrie volunteers with the Downey Rose Float. She is also a board member with the Exchange Club Family Support Center of Downey, an organization that works to prevent child abuse, and is a coordinator for the ASSISTEENS, the youth auxiliary of the Assistance League of Downey.

**Season's Greetings and warm holiday wishes to our Downey families and friends.**

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# Grand Marshall, George Redfox

Walk into George Redfox's classroom at Warren High School and chances are good you'll hear Frank Sinatra's golden voice crooning over the radio.

It suits George perfect: classic, retro, and slyly cool.

George has lived in Downey for all his 51 years. Well, almost: he moved to Downey from South Gate when he was 6 months old. He went through the Downey school system, starting with kindergarten at Downey Elementary (it was located where City Hall is today), Gallatin Elementary, East Middle School and then Downey High, class of 1986. (George recognizes the irony that he graduated from Downey High but established his career at Warren. Make of that what you will.)

After completing his general education courses at Cerritos College, he transferred to Cal State Fullerton and earned a history degree. His teaching credential was issued by Point Loma University.

He was hired by Downey Unified as a playground assistant at William Elementary and then as a full-time substitute. When a photography position opened at Warren in 1997, it was a natural fit for George, whose father owned and operated a photography studio -- Redfox Camera -- in Huntington Park.

"I worked with my dad in the shop and I grew up with a dark room in the house," said George. "I've had a camera since I was probably 10 years old."

In fact, George had planned on working in his dad's store but the big box retailers made it almost impossible for small photo studios to survive. So George segued into education and today he teaches black and white photography

and some digital.

And in an age when most teens carry a camera everywhere they go, the class is predictably popular among students.

"The numbers are pretty high for that class," said George. "I don't have any problem filling it; it's over-filled most of the time."

Away from the classroom, George dedicates much of his time to the Downey community. It's how he was raised as a young boy.

"I think the first thing that I really got involved in was the Rose Float actually," said George. "I've been working on the Rose Float since I think I was 6.

"I was six years old and my grandpa worked at the city yard filling up the police cars with gas. And my dad would take me down to visit my grandpa and they built the float there. From there we just started working on a little bit of the float. That's pretty much where it started."

George's appreciation for local history also started as a boy, when his family would take walks around the neighborhood. The mid-century architecture especially stood out to George.

When the Speedee McDonald's was threatened with demolition in 1994, George got his first taste of local advocacy. He wrote letters to the Downey Eagle newspaper pleading for the landmark restaurant to be saved.

In 2010, George formed the Downey Conservancy, a non-profit that works to preserve historical structures in Downey.

What makes Downey a special place?



*Favorite Fun Facts*

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS MOVIE**  
"MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET"

**FAVORITE CHRISTMAS CAROL**  
"JINGLE BELLS" by FRANK SINATRA

"The mid-century architecture around here is second to none," George said. "It was pretty much fully developed in the 50s and 60s because of the aerospace plant that we had here. People had money, a lot of executives lived here. So you had a lot of custom-built homes, a lot of unique style architecture."

George doesn't see himself moving out of Downey any time soon, even if the city is changing.

"My family's here and I really like the city," George said. "I get to the beach in 15 or 20 minutes, the mountains in half an hour, and Orange County in 15 minutes. Same with Downtown L.A.

"And I don't mind the six-minute commute."

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# SANTA PHOTOS

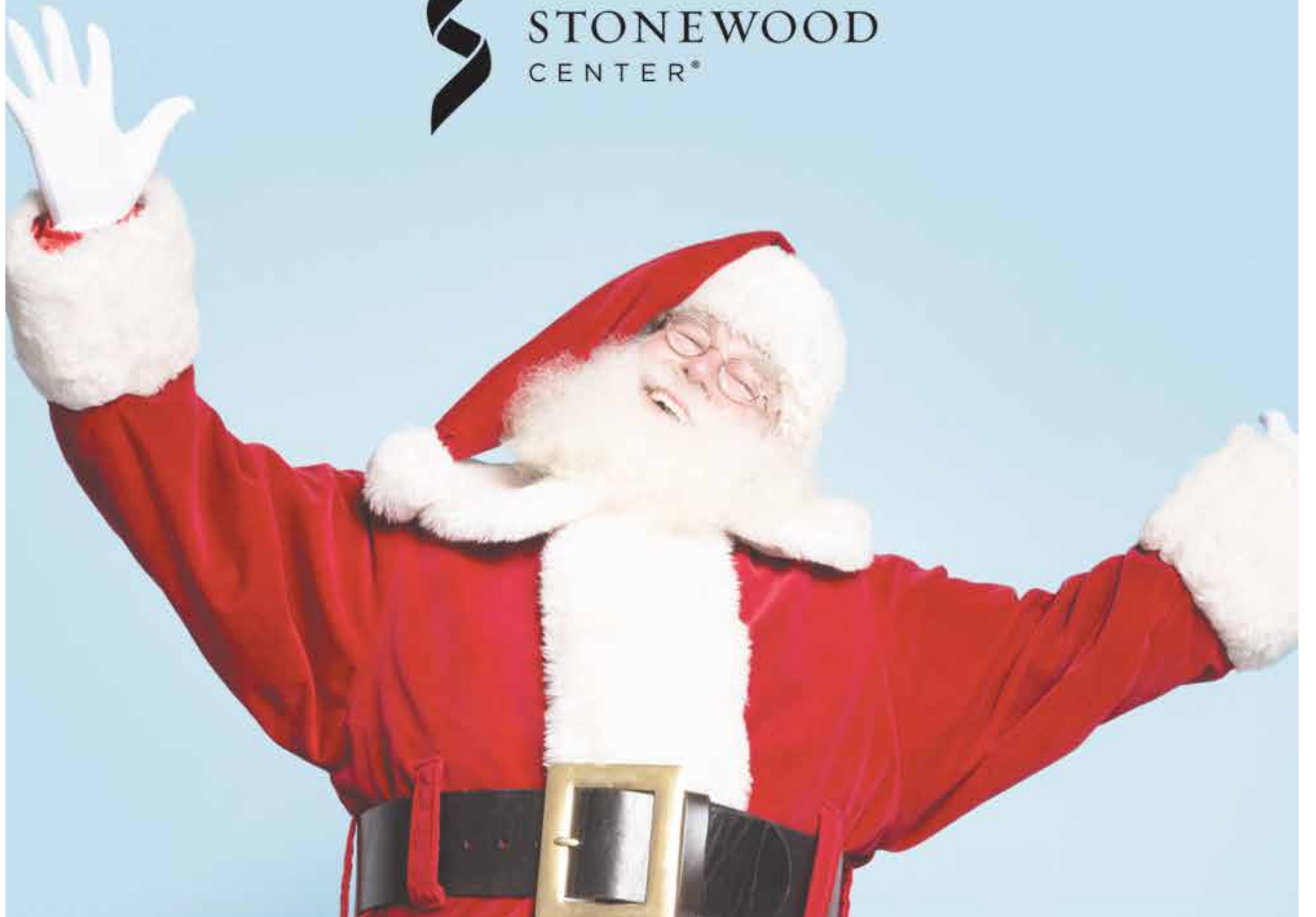
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# Paging... Dr. Frischer



I tend to use this year-end message as an opportunity to offer uplifting advice to our community. This year, I had a somewhat different inspiration.

Death is inevitable and will touch us all. It takes our loved ones, it takes our friends, and eventually it will come for you and me. As they say, none of us will be getting out of this alive. Allow me to share what I hope will prove to be a useful approach to thinking about death.

Every generation arrives and departs. In essence, this paves the way for the next generation to take the journey of life, to experience hardships and joys, and then in turn to step aside for the following generation. This pattern never changes.

What if a supreme being came to you with an offer that abolished death but likewise abolished births, because one generation would not be leaving to make room for another? Would you consider such a condition? There would never again be a child, grandchild, a youth, a first love, new hopes, new ideas, or new achievements. Could your answer be in doubt?

When we fear death's decree, let's keep that in mind. It will give solace to remember our loved ones who came before, making room for our own journey. Let's focus on the vision of many generations to come, along with their own discoveries, visions, hopes and dreams. Death is as natural as birth, and is inevitable for every one of us.

If there is an uplifting message in this, it is to remember that this is our time for life. Let's embrace the journey, and do our best to appreciate every day.

I wish you all healthy and happy holidays!

*Wishing All Downey Residents And Business Owners A Wonderful Holiday Season. May Peace, Joy & Happiness Be With You This Holiday Season!*

*Happy Holidays,  
Carrie Nva*



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## How Mark Keller transforms into Santa Claus

"It started with a red flannel hand-me-down Santa suit from Sears," says Mark Keller. "Over the years I got high quality pieces to upgrade it. Velvets. And things you might never see, like Santa-size striped socks from All American."

Mark is this year's official city Santa Claus, a role he comes by naturally, his uncle and his grandfather having been Santa too.

"I started playing the part about 1985, when I was just out of Warren High School," said Mark, a Downey native. "My uncle's kids could always tell it was him, but they never suspected when it was me."

Mark got started as the Chamber of Commerce Parade's Santa in 1988 "because Marsha asked me to do it." That would be Marsha Moode, who for years did live commentary on local TV from a parade-side booth, with guests like Supervisor Don Knabe.

Ever wondered what makes some Santas more real than others?

"Spoiler alert," says Mark. "Three hair pieces. Not two. First the wig, and then I got good advice from another Santa, to get the moustache separate from the beard. So my jaws and chin and beard move together when I talk but the moustache stays put."

"The make-up is the hard part," Mark says. "First, a really clean shave. Then I start gluing on the beard and the handlebar moustache. And the eyebrows. It takes hours."

"God bless my wig man in Long Beach," says Mark. "He keeps mine in good shape. Babies get their hands tangled in the beard, and of course there's no eating while costumed for the part. No cocoa in the snowy white moustache."

Another personal touch: "I even got my prescription ground into the lenses of my Santa wire-rimmed glasses."

"Doing the Civic Light Operas I met a costumer and he now hand-makes my costumes for me," says Mark. "And I have a specially made leather pouch on my belt that I can get into real fast, for my candy canes. I start out with four dozen. Sometimes a child sitting on my knee will ask for

a puppy. I never promise anything, so I say, 'We'll see what we can do. But here's a candy cane for you.' They're like Santa's calling card."

The theatre is Mark's passion, especially musical theatre, so creating his Santa as a three-dimensional stage character comes naturally. Mark was the long-time house manager for Moode's famed Downey Civic Light Opera productions, overseeing all the public audience areas.

Later as her technical director, Mark is credited with designing and building the sets for some of the intimate side-stage scenes which were a Moode trademark, notably Jud Fry's smoke house "lonely room" in Oklahoma.

The Downey Symphonic Society is also dear to Mark's heart. He is a member of the Board of Directors, and drawing on his years of experience backstage, he acts as stage manager for the Symphony Orchestra's performances in the Downey Theater. His is the invisible off-stage voice you hear saying, "Take note of the exits, and please unwrap your cough drops now."

What if it should rain on the parade, which it never does?

"I have a Santa sack with emergency supplies," Mark says. "There are ponchos in it for the kids riding on the float with me."

How does Mark get to the parade?

"I dress at home and drive my car. When I get to where the cops are directing traffic, it's obvious who I am. Sometime they ask if they can escort me to my place. When it's over, I walk to my car and drive home, waving to people as I go."

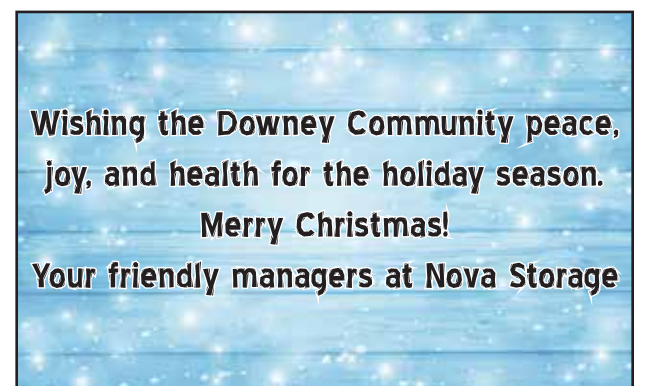
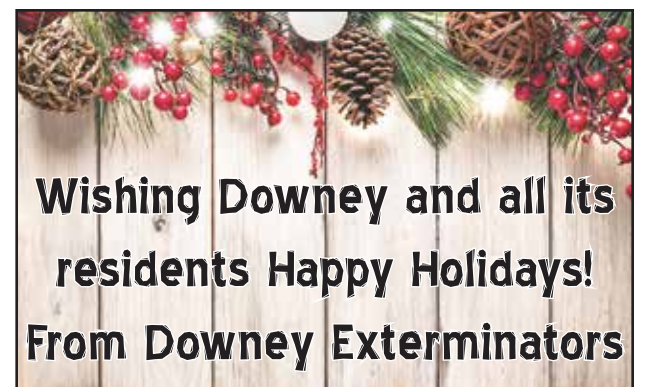
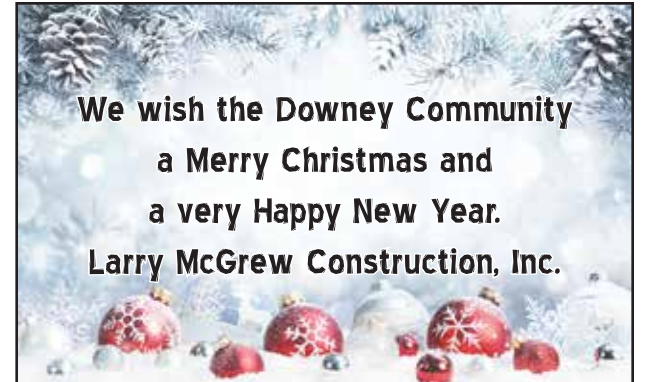
"I do Santa for the Children's Christmas Story Reading at the library," added Mark, "and the Kiwanis Christmas breakfast at the Rio Hondo Event Center. Each first or second grade teacher brings a boy and a girl who might not have a Christmas otherwise."

Mark also does private parties and occasionally parents will prep him with "the goods" on the children. The children are convinced he really is Santa who knows when they've been naughty and when they've been nice. Biggest present he's ever brought? "A small two-wheeler bike, not a trainer. Somehow the father

and I got it into my sack."

"Christmas Eve is my big day," says Mark. "I'm busy from early afternoon until 1 am. So I'm grateful to stay home on the 25th. Although once I did work on Christmas Day. [Mayor] Rick Rodriguez asked me to surprise his son who had just gotten back from duty overseas."

"On Christmas day, there's no letdown," says Mark. "Just a feeling of contentment. Of completion, of doing my job."



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## Meet Your Parade emcees

Tom Lockyer and Jacqueline Mejia have been named emcees of the Downey Christmas Parade.

Both work for El Clasificado, where Lockyer is senior manager of human resources and Mejia is the business development officer.

Lockyer and Mejia will be emceeing the parade both on-site and for the parade's live stream.



Happy Holidays from The Asperger-Gurrola Family

Wishing you a Happy 2020 New Year!

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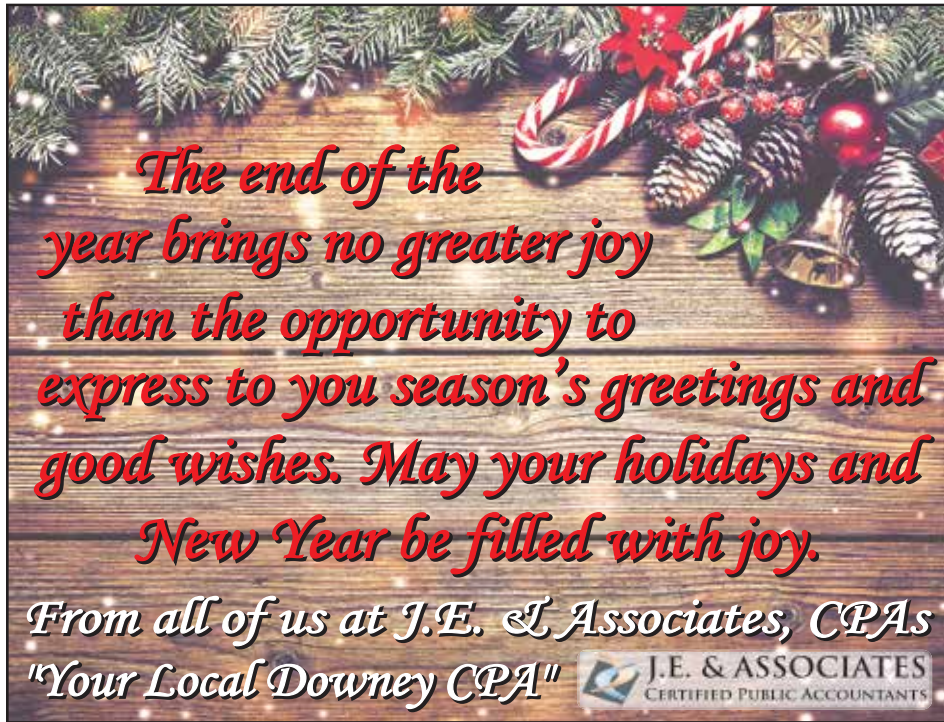
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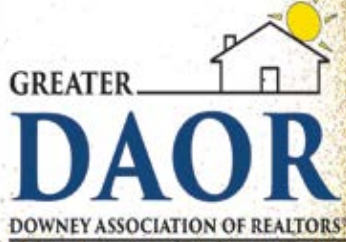




*The end of the year brings no greater joy than the opportunity to express to you season's greetings and good wishes. May your holidays and New Year be filled with joy.*

From all of us at **J.E. & Associates, CPAs**  
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The REALTORS, Leaders, and Staff at the Greater Downey Association of REALTORS, wish everyone and their families a Wonderful Holiday Season full of love and happiness.




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