

Published December 18th, 2013

## It's a Wonderful, but Chilly, Life in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Mike and Jen Branagh's children, Bradley, 18 months, Brody, 5, and Sophia, 3, tell Santa what they want for Christmas. Photo Gint Federas

tree lighting ceremony," said Mike Branagh. "We have many great memories from these times. Lafayette was very special to my parents and Matt and I carry the same love for the city. We wanted the community to create the same memories we had so we thought, why not bring it into Lafayette? Partnering with Dana was an easy decision as she is a close friend of ours and shares the same love for Lafayette."

Two open-walled mini house-like structures were built specifically for the event by carpenters with Branagh Development. Branagh is currently working on updating Squirrels restaurant just across the way from the park, so the structures were constructed there.

While the weather outside was indeed frightful, the holiday cheer was delightful. Presumably the reindeer were still in training at the North Pole, so "Old Betsy" - Lafayette's historic fire truck - filled in to transport Santa Claus to Plaza Park where he was greeted by little fans.

The bearded man in red, along with complimentary hot chocolate and cookies, made the first ever "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" event a big hit to kick off the holidays, with a tree lighting, music and gratitude walls full of personal notes from kids responding to the question "What are you grateful for?" Sweet answers ran the gamut from food, my home, to my family and our three cats and beyond.

Local realtor Dana Green and Branagh Development, along with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce sponsored the block party. "It was heartwarming to see the outpouring of community spirit as we joined together to kick off the holidays in true Lafayette fashion. As a lifelong resident of Lafayette, this event proved once again why this is such a great community - I look forward to making this an annual event," said Green.

"Growing up my family had an annual tradition of going to San Francisco the day after Thanksgiving for the

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