

'Sing' A Success

Inaugural Park Ridge 'Christmas Sing' Attracts Crowds, Positive Feedback

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Around 100 Park Ridgians flocked to Hodges Park in front of the city hall on Christmas Eve night for what city officials hope will be the start of a new annual tradition.

Park Ridge Christmas Sing was organized by Allison Troy, who was inspired by a tradition she grew up with in north central New Jersey. Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church has been doing the singalong for 100 years, and its congregation sent Troy sheet music it's been using for decades. Park Ridge area musicians provided the musical accompaniment.

Only some participants sang during last week's inaugural gathering, although the atmosphere was lively. Neither Troy nor the officials in attendance saw that as a bad thing. In the end, they said Christmas Sing was meant to bring the community together and give residents a chance to connect.

Troy previously told Journal & Topics that, during the fall of 2024, she found herself thinking that Park Ridge reminded her of Basking Ridge, and that it would be nice for her own kids to grow up with something like that. Originally, she thought about simply making it a neighborhood event. But then Troy decided to "aim for the stars" and something everybody could enjoy.

She reached out to Park Ridge Mayor Marty Maloney, who gave her the okay to hold the event at Hodges Park, as well as to the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce. Both offered support.

Troy said she wanted to have a brass band provide musical accompaniment. With the help of her friends and business connections, she got First United Methodist Church of Park Ridge musical director John Schuman on board. Musician Mary Poole and two of her sons, Oliver and Basil Poole, agreed to participate as well, as did Kathleen Meyer.

Ahead of the event, Troy said she was worried that, since she put the event together relatively quickly, she might not get much attendance. But around 50 people gathered in front of the city hall about 15 minutes before the 7:30 p.m. start time, and the crowd kept growing.

In his introductory remarks, Maloney said he was pleased with the turnout.

"We weren't really sure what to expect tonight," he said. "There are a lot of people here." He quipped that, while Basking Ridge "got a bit of a head start" on Park Ridge, "we're starting a new tradition this evening."

The festivities kicked off with "O



Musicians play on the steps of city hall during the inaugural Christmas Sing on Dec. 24. (Photos by Igor Studenkov)



Bonnie and Craig Tinder take part in the Park Ridge's inaugural Christmas Sing.

Come All Ye Faithful" and ended with "Joy to the World". There were 10 carols overall, most of which, fitting the tradition's church origins, were religious in nature. A group of residents did do a bit of an encore before the crowd left, singing the first verse of "Jingle Bells".

Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jackie Mathews, who spent much of the event singing along, described the Christmas Sing as "just beautiful."

"I'm grateful," she said. "Being able to spend a little bit of time on this day with my neighbors meant a lot to me."

"It really was a wonderful event, and a great testament to the great people in Park Ridge," Maloney said. "We really didn't know what to expect and I think it exceeded all expectations."

Troy said that she would likely make some tweaks next year, such as starting earlier to accommodate



Allison Troy (left) gives musician Kathleen Meyer a gift of homemade treats after last week's event.

families with younger kids. She said that, between how many people showed up and the feedback from friends and neighbors, she thought Christmas Sing had staying power.

"I'm thrilled," she said. "I think my favorite part was seeing so many people walk up and wanting to share the experience together, and seeing everyone with families, and running into old friends and neighbors, and being festive

together," Troy said. "I think it's just a joyful event and I'm thrilled everyone got to enjoy it."

Her oldest son, 9-year-old Tommy Troy, said he appreciated the togetherness he saw.

"I liked the [Christmas Sing] because I got to see a lot of my relatives, and so many people coming together for the same reason, and everybody working hard, and everybody just singing and having fun and helping out too," he said.