

Mrs. Claus takes centre-stage at tonight's tree lighting ceremony



By Brock Weir

Holiday preparations are in full swing, and there is, perhaps, no busier place at this time of year than the North Pole.

Mrs. Claus, however, is preparing for a trek down to Aurora tonight, December 9, to once again lend the Town her own special brand of Christmas magic, this time accompanied by a few furry friends.

Aurora's 10th Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony gets underway in the courtyard of Town Hall at 6.30 p.m. with festivities running through 8.30 p.m.

It will include complimentary hot chocolate with a food donation to the Salvation Army, an official countdown to the tree lighting led by Santa Claus himself at 6.45, but as soon as the tree is lit, it is his wife's time to shine as she heads over to the Aurora Seniors' Centre for a special reading of 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.

Ahead of next week's event, Ms. Claus shared some of her excitement with The Auroran.

Auroran: Your reading of 'Twas The Night Before Christmas' is a popular Aurora tradition. When did you first hear it yourself?

Mrs. Claus: It would not be the season without that story and no matter how many thousands and thousands of times I have read that story, every single time is just as special as the first time.

The story has actually come together in bits and pieces over the years and it actually started out with a church about 170 years ago around New York. Of course, everything that is set around that story is true, so putting the final touches together on it was very natural. It just never seemed like a story to be told, but the magnificent things that do happen on Christmas Eve is certainly worthy of storytelling.

A: What goes through your mind when you prepare to read the story to what could be a new crop of kids every year?

MC: I just love looking in their eyes and their faces and knowing the magic that is going to be happening in the season. It is nothing but complete feelings of joy when I am sitting there.

A: 2015 marks the 10th anniversary of the Tree Lighting Ceremony and I understand you're bringing a few special guests with you to make the occasion extra-special this year.

MC: I think a lot of children are curious about Santa and how things work at the North Pole, but how many children actually get to see the live reindeer? It is very rare, but also very special that we're bringing them to this event. But, as you know, Santa just loves Aurora and he had such a great time at the Parade on Saturday, so without a doubt we wanted to bring two of our special reindeer!

A: What are you doing to get them ready?

MC: We wanted to conserve their energy because on December 24, they are very busy that night and do have a training schedule, so

we are just going to keep them in a pen at the Ceremony so that kids can come up and actually see them up close and look at them eye to eye. We're not going to be walking them around though because we don't want to disrupt the training program we have them on.

A: Just a few days ago, your husband made his way down Yonge Street in the traditional Santa Under the Stars Parade. What did he have to say about it?

MC: Considering the fantastic weather, I knew he would be beaming ear to ear, but he came out and said, 'Every year I never think it can get better, and it really did.' He loved the number of people who came out and it was such a warm welcome for him that coming to Aurora really is a treat.

A: Now, Santa is going to be a very busy guy on Christmas Eve, but what are your plans for this magical night? Do you get to kick back and relax after helping to get the Big Guy ready?

MC: Everyone knows how hard the elves work and what a massive team it is to get Santa ready for that night. We are able to track Santa's movements and that is really my time to be able to treat the elves to a really fun, festive evening. I plan things for the elves, kind of like their own elf party, because they have done a really good job and it is our night to celebrate, while we celebrate Santa's successes as he goes to all the different time zones and visits all the different countries.

A: I wish I had an invitation! Any tips for local kids as they look forward to the big night ? and the even bigger morning?

MC: Take advantage of all the changes in technology and if you have never tracked Santa online, it is certainly a neat experience. I know that technology is still new for us, but we're actually relying on it at the North Pole and it is a great comfort seeing all the countries he is visiting and all the time zones.