

Brockton hopes to set new Santa Hat record on Sunday

By Erik Potter Enterprise Staff Writer-Posted Nov 17, 2010 @ 10:54 AM



Zachary Aguy, 5, of Brockton is all smiles as he wears his Santa hat

Mullingar, Ireland, has until Sunday to enjoy its world record, and then Brockton is taking it back – or so the City of Champions hopes.

Signature Healthcare purchased 10,000 red Santa hats to distribute this week to every Brockton elementary school and Brockton High School student to try to smash the 700-person record of greatest number of people at one time in one place wearing a Santa Claus hat. That record was set last year in Mullingar, besting the original record set a year earlier in Brockton with 507 people. Organizer John Merian, a member of the Greater Brockton Holiday Parade planning committee, which is also planning the Santa Hat Challenge, said he hopes the majority of the students will show up Sunday at 1 p.m. for the official count.

The hat challenge is part of the committee's efforts to celebrate Brockton's history as the city with the first-ever department store Santa Claus, played in 1890 by James Edgar, owner of the downtown Edgar's Department Store.

"He was a tremendous philanthropist who loved children," Merian said of Edgar. "What we're trying to emphasize is bringing people together at the holidays, celebrating the history of the city."

School custodians have been picking up the hats the past few days from Merian's downtown store, Tuxedos by Merian. Of the 10,000 hats, 1,500 will go to the high school and 8,500 to the elementary schools. Many of the elementary schools in the area will be decorating the hats before Sunday.

Diane Gosselin, principal at the Downey Elementary School, said her students will be decorating their hats on Thursday with glitter, glue and holiday-shaped foam cutouts. She has 600 hats, enough for every child. It should be fun. We're looking forward to it," Gosselin said. The students will have to make their own way to the official count on Sunday. A good showing could push the limits of the one-block stretch of Main Street, at Crescent Street, that will be blocked off for the occasion. Festivities for the Santa Hat Challenge will start at 11:30 a.m. with DJ Joe Lupica playing holiday music. The sign-in for the count will start at noon, with the official count happening in front of the parking garage at 1 p.m.

Participants will be automatically registered in a raffle for up to 30 prizes, including an Amazon Kindle.

Anyone can participate, and there will be extra Santa hats on sale at the event for \$1. Proceeds benefit the Holiday Parade fund. Last year, hats went out to only four elementary schools and the Brockton High School. This year, all the elementary schools are participating. Next year, Merian said, he expects that they'll give hats to the middle schools and Trinity Catholic Academy as well and make it a citywide effort.

Gosselin said that it was a voluntary activity for the schools to participate in, but one that she couldn't turn down.

"I just thought it was something fun for families to get involved in," she said. The hat challenge is a lead-up to the annual Holiday Parade on Nov. 27. Activities will start at 10 a.m.; the parade begins at 1 p.m. This year's grand marshal will be U.S. Sen. Scott Brown. The parade is put on by the Downtown Brockton Association, Montello Business Association, Campello Business Association and the City of Brockton. Good Samaritan Medical Center is sponsoring the James Edgar Community Service Award, which will be given out the day of the parade.



Five-year-old Zaikez Gomes-Rivers and other kindergarten students at the Downey School in Brockton line up to go outside Tuesday wearing their Santa hats. Brockton is planning a Santa Hat Challenge on Sunday, hoping to break the world record for the greatest number of people at one time in one place wearing a Santa Claus hat.



Zachary Aguy, 5, Brockton, left, runs outside wearing his Santa hat. Hats were distributed in Brockton's public schools this week in advance of Sunday's attempt to set a world record for Santa hats

For more information about either event, visit www.1stdepartmentstoresanta.com.

For information about registering to be in the parade, call John Merian at 508-612-2688.