

SARATOGA Christmas

Complimentary

HOLIDAY 2023



**SARATOGA
TODAY®**



from the editor

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Happy Holidays, Saratoga!

I think my favorite time in Saratoga...is dusk...on a snowy night...right before Christmas. The lights are twinkling...the shop windows are so inviting...and you feel like you're in a Snow Globe!

It truly is the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

As you know... We love being involved with local organizations to help them spread the word, and this publication came about to help promote **Catholic Charities'** major fundraising event - the **Saratoga Festival of Trees**. Such a fun event and for such a good cause - I hope you make that your kickoff event for the Holiday Season, (so many fun things planned!) The FOT Preview Reception is Wednesday 11/29 - hope to see you there!

Grab your calendar when flipping through our **Save the Date**, then grab your checkbook while reading **It Feels Good to Give** :)

If you haven't heard yet, it's Fred Clark's 25th Year as THE Saratoga Santa. I've known Fred for the past 25 years and he is the real deal. We loved having him on our first Saratoga Christmas cover and are enjoying celebrating his 25th Anniversary!

Our little "City in the Country" truly shines this time of year, and we hope this magazine helps you plan your holiday outings, and you enjoy every page (as always - tons of great stories to read!)

Thank you to all the advertisers that make our Saratoga TODAY magazines possible, and please mention us by name when frequenting their businesses.

*I wish you all Happy Holidays
and a Blessed New Year!*


Chris



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MATT RAMOS

See the story
on page 48



SARATOGA Christmas

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**SARATOGA
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THE SARATOGA SANTA



CELEBRATES HIS SILVER JUBILEE

WRITTEN BY **MEGIN POTTER** | PHOTOS BY **MATT RAMOS**

Christmas miracles, merry-making, and 25 years of good cheer.

Santa Claus brings wonder and joy to the hearts of children everywhere. Now, after 25 years of being "Santa," Fred Clark shares why he still believes in Santa.

"Whether you're 8 or 80, if you believe in Santa, the magic of Christmas will always be in your heart," he says.

THAT CERTAIN SPECIAL SPIRIT

Even before he began playing Kris Kringle, he was a benevolent character who cherished peace and goodwill toward men.

"He is Santa in every cell of his body," said Lea Amorosi, who for 10 years, has been the "Little Italian Marketing and Technology Elf" keeping

the production lines rolling from one busy holiday season to the next.

"The love you feel when you see him is real," Lea remembers telling her son, Bryce, the year he turned 11 (and was beginning not to believe). Now, at age 21, after years of friendship, Bryce's face still lights up when he sees Santa, she said.



WHEN FATHER CHRISTMAS COMES TO VISIT

Before Santa's naturally bushy snow-white beard grew in, children knew him by his smile, drawn up like a bow, and the twinkle in his eye. When they saw him, they knew they'd found a friend.

In the 1960s he was a policeman. He's also worked as a correctional officer, a bouncer, and a Kenny Rogers lookalike. For 31 years, he was employed as a Saratoga Springs City School District custodian. In 1998, he became the Saratoga Santa for the very first time at Hewitt's Garden Center.

The kids at school came to know him as Santa, and during his last year with the district, there was some debate about the secularization of Santa Claus. He took a firm stand, insisting that Santa is not a religious symbol, and the school eventually agreed. By the time he retired in 2004, he was pleased to take on the holiday persona year-round.

MAKING MIRACLES HAPPEN

After 25 years, the memories that still awe Santa are the moments when children (some who had never held a toy in their hand, were bedridden, unable to walk, or mostly non-verbal) would brighten at the sight of him, smile, and amaze onlookers by eagerly shouting "Santa!" or excitedly laughing, "Ho! Ho! Ho!"

These miraculous moments were often heart-wrenchingly beautiful.

One year, Santa was overcome with the emotion of visiting a family in Corinth and a little boy who had lost his mother and a sibling to a tragic house fire.

"When that boy saw me, he ran over and started hugging and hanging on to my leg. He was crying and I started crying. It was something else. That's one memory I'll never forget."



EXCLUSIVE!

**BREAKING NEWS:
SANTA SHARES
HIS SECRETS**

We caught up with the Saratoga Santa and got all the answers to your biggest questions.

What are your favorite kind of cookies?

"Santa Claus eats all kinds of cookies," he says with a hearty laugh, "but peanut butter cookies are my favorite. I also like lemon cookies, they're good."

Which Christmas song do you like the most?

"Must Be Santa" by Bill Fredricks. "When the children come to see me, we fire up that song and dance along."

Where's your hat, Santa?

"My great-grandson, Cooper, took my hat a long time ago and hasn't given it back yet," Santa giggles. (It's also too hot to wear indoors.)

Why does your moustache curl like that?

Mrs. Claus suggested the upward twirl of his whiskers. His Elf, Lea, said his moustache is shaped like a smile. In photographs it shows the happiness and joy Santa brings to all - even when he's not facing the camera!

Does Santa have a magic charm?

Yes! Santa is never without his pocket watch. Kids are enraptured by its wintery ice-skating scene.



FINDING ST. NICK

In 2006, Lea faced a seemingly impossible task; finding Santa and asking him to come to her family holiday party.

"How do you find Santa?" she asked herself. Then, as if by magic, the answer came to her and she called The Costumer in Schenectady (who had made his custom suit for years) and connected her to Santa.

The Amorosi family had a wonderful time with Santa that Christmas. He came back again the following year. In 2008, Lea helped Santa save 75% off the price of his business cards, and in 2014, launched his website with downloadable photos and glowing testimonials from the community. In 2018, they revamped his website to what it is today.

Local families love Santa so much they invite him year after year. For 18 years, the community flocked to Breakfast with Santa on Christmas Eve morning at The Saratoga Hilton Hotel. "It was a phenomenal event and seeing the joy in all the kids' faces brings tears to your eyes," said his elf, Lea.

For 11 years, Santa's face has donned the label of the Saratoga Winery's holiday bottle, and Santa regularly appears at Harvey's Restaurant during the Saratoga Springs Downtown Association's Victorian Street Walk.

When Santa springs to his sleigh, it's a Honda with the license plate, Ho Ho Ho MC, and once, Mohawk Honda's holiday television campaign featured him and his granddaughter, Angela. (Aiden, Gianna, Angela, and great-grandson Cooper have also appeared with him on his business cards!).

Santa, and his wife of 61 years, Carol, have four children; Laura, Fred Jr., Lisa, and Craig; seven grandchildren; Jennifer, Joey, Lauren, Erica, Anthony, Angela, and Craig; and six great-grandchildren; Aiden, Gianna, Cooper, Alexa, Harper, and Brady.

Santa never tires of asking children what that one special gift they'd like to wake up to on Christmas morning is, he said, and the answers, which have included everything from an ATM machine, to a baby sister, to a puppy, continue to surprise and delight him. "I hope and pray I can stay healthy and do this forever," he said.

As long as the bells continue ringing, all is merry and bright, search the sky on Christmas Eve, because Santa Claus comes tonight! 🎅

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