



Boaz Joseph photos

'Joseph' and 'Mary' lead a candlelight procession, and (below right) 19-year-old Esther Wegner sings with the Peace Portal Alliance choir.

1,300 brave first citywide Christmas festival

Spirit not dampened

Alex Browne
Staff Reporter

They had the venues and the volunteers – and willing participants with plenty of seasonal spirit to go around.

The only thing missing from the Christmas on the Peninsula picture was clement weather.

Organizers of the first of what is to be an annual event, held Nov. 28, admit rain and gusts of cold wind put a damper on what the event could have been, discouraging many from venturing out to events at churches, businesses and White Rock Community Centre.

But festival co-organizer Brian Walks said that, even as the weather turned bitterly cold at the Christmas Lighting ceremonies at Miramar Plaza, volunteers at the door of the adjacent community centre had counted more than 1,300 visitors to that venue alone.

Hot chocolate, singers, children's activities, a Christmas market and community entertainers helped

take the edge off the winter chill.

"There's definitely an appetite among the public for such an event," Walks said.

While shuttle buses linking venues were under-used by the public, Walks said, they were useful in moving singers from Seaview Pentecostal – one of a number of groups entertaining the public in appropriately Victorian costume – from location to location.

And the conclusion of the day-long event, a Carols by Candlelight singalong with White Rock Children's Choir, led by Sarona Mynhardt, packed St. John's Presbyterian Church, Walks said.

"For a first event it was really good," Mayor Catherine Ferguson noted at Monday night's council meeting, commending event founder Liv Butow for bringing together 20 churches, 40 community groups and 130 volunteers.

Christmas on the Peninsula is already being considered for a return to Miramar Plaza in 2010.

