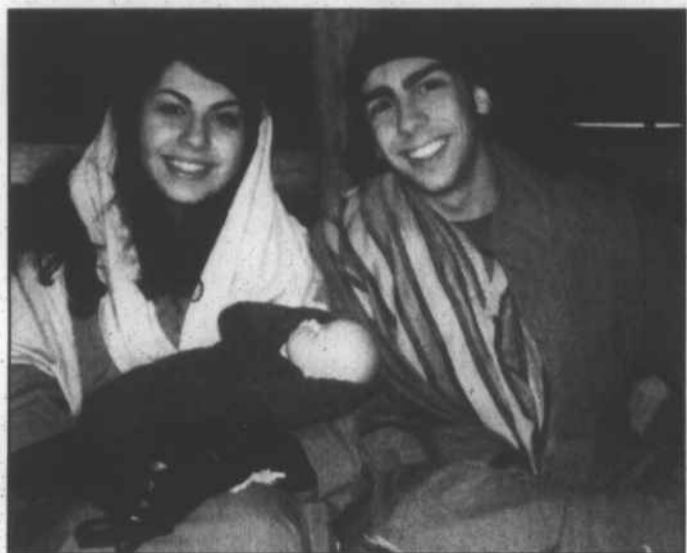




Diann Owen leads the acclaimed Renaissance Choir.

Photos by Layla Farmer



Michelle Andraos as "Mary" and Andy Andraos as "Joseph."



Doneya Rush visits with Santa.

Budget Director Jones honored by her peers

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Ann Jones, the city's director of budget and evaluation, has received the 2009 Jack Vogt Award from the N.C. Local Government Budget Association for advancing the field of budgeting and evaluation in local government in North Carolina.

In 1994, Jones proposed the creation of the North Carolina Benchmarking Project to give cities reliable information

about the cost and provision of municipal services. She has co-chaired the project steering committee since its inception, and the project has grown from seven participating cities reporting on seven services, to 17 cities and 11 services. It has since become a model for regional benchmarking initiatives throughout the United States.

Jones has also given presentations on capital planning and budgeting for annexation at the Institute of Government and developed an operations

review process for the Winston-Salem city budget that helped the city save \$13.5 million over 15 years. In 2002, she developed a new zero-based budgeting process that has saved the city \$680,000 since 2003. She is a founding member of the N.C. Local Government Budget Association.

City Manager Lee Garrity said, "I cannot think of another North Carolina local government professional who is more deserving of this award.... Ann is probably the most respected member of our staff for our elected officials. That respect and trust comes from her many years of carefully guiding the City Council through the annual budget process."

Jones is the fourth recipient of the award, which was created in honor of Jack Vogt, a long-time professor at the Institute of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The award was presented Dec. 3 during the association's winter conference in Charlotte.



Jones

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A Gift for You

Collaborative creates Christmas celebration for city residents

BY LAYLA FARMER
 THE CHRONICLE

The Christmas spirit was alive and well in downtown Winston-Salem this week.

Local residents of every age and persuasion poured into the Millennium Center on Fifth Street Monday night, to take part in the second annual Christmas for the City celebration, held Dec. 21-24 this year. Volunteers in Santa hats greeted attendees as they entered the doors, welcoming them with handshakes and 'Merry Christmas' wishes.

Inside the expansive venue, the options were seemingly endless. Spreads of festive treats covered tables in the main floor's Party room as one musical group after another took to the stage, regaling audiences with rousing renditions of Christmas favorites. In another area, families posed for free portraits with their loved ones. In the basement below, a multicultural area highlighted Christmas traditions from faraway places. Children and parents created toys in the toy workshop; or took part in an ancient love feast. The second floor offered a visual art gallery; performing arts shows and photographs with Santa Claus, among other things. Outside, Trade Street was blocked off to accommodate a live nativity scene and a band.

Members of Friendly Arabic Church in Kernersville put on the nativity scene Monday. The Christmas story has special significance to the Friendly members, many of whom are refugees who fled from the Middle East because of religious persecution, said Kalim Andraos, a Lebanese businessman who has been in the country for nearly 30 years.

"I'm a Galilean; most of us are from the Middle East - this is who we are," he declared. "... This is the biggest event around here around Christmas where everybody comes together, so we felt obligated to be a part of it."

In the "Mercy Street" area behind the building, church volunteers offered free hotdogs and drinks to



Above: Vincent and Sherry Johnson with their granddaughters, Zion and Imani.

Right: A boy comes face-to-face with a nativity sheep.

hungry patrons; and clothing and food bags for those in need.

"We wanted to do something that was very inclusive of the whole city," commented Christmas for the City Executive Producer Chuck Spong. "We were very much (focused on) how we could go to the city and serve the city (residents) where they were."

The project was the result of a collaboration among more than 25 area churches and community organizations, led by Winston-Salem First, formerly First Assembly of God.

"What's most exciting to me is the churches and groups," Spong related. "They are working together in a way that I have never seen."

Themed "Love Out Loud," the 2009 event was designed to bring a broad cross-section of the community together, regardless of their religious perspective, Spong said.



"Each year, we try and choose a theme that is broad enough that no matter where you are in your spiritual journey, you can come and be a part of the celebration," he explained. "We established a theme that anyone could relate to. Love is a value that we all hold."

Compassion and justice were the underpinnings for this year's theme, Spong said. In an effort to incorporate the social responsibility that Love Out Loud speaks to, organizers invited 15 nonprofits to take part in the celebration. Volunteers from each organization set up in "Connecting Compassion Central," the area designated for prospective volunteers and those in need of services. Each night, the celebration highlighted different nonprofits, through live interviews with leaders from

the organizations. The event will culminate today (Dec. 24) with a candlelight service from 5-9 p.m.

Entrepreneurs Vincent and Sherry Johnson brought their two young granddaughters, Zion, 17 months and Imani, 7, to take part in Christmas for the City this year. Sherry Johnson, who co-owns the This n That hat shop and Rainbow Enterprises II travel agency with her husband, said she was glad to find a spiritual way to celebrate the holiday with the girls.

"This had, to me, more of a spiritual overtone to it (than other holiday activities) and it's very convenient and free," she related. "I just think it's a great way for different organizations and people to get together ... to celebrate the one common cause for the season."



Spong

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