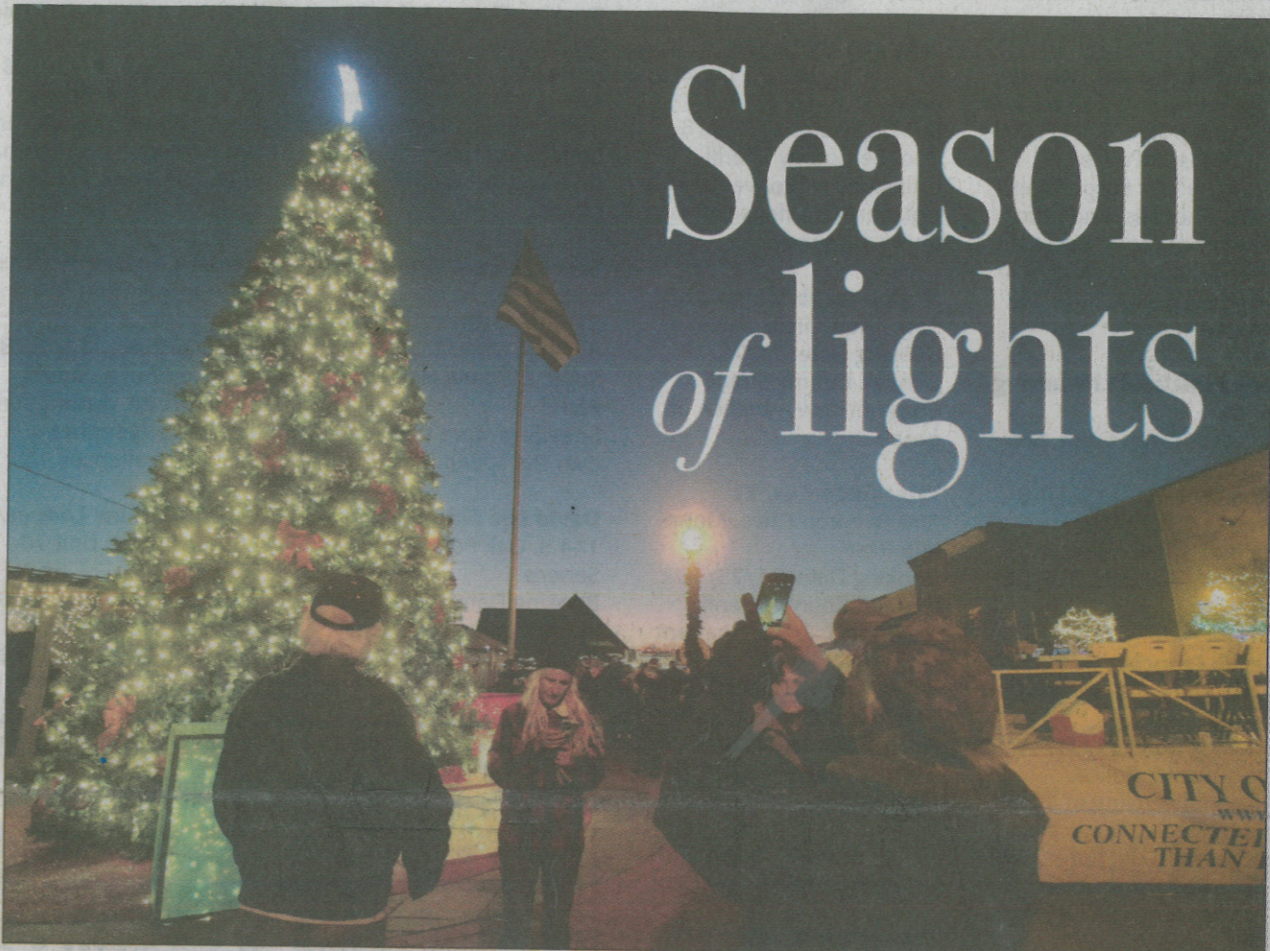


Season of lights



PHOTOS BY REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

Hundreds crowded downtown Seneca's Norton Thompson Park on Monday night for the unveiling of the city's new holiday light show, including a brand-new 32-foot Christmas tree.

City unveils new Christmas attraction

BY NORM CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — City administrator Scott Moulder was both excited and a little nervous as he watched the unveiling of the new Christmas light show at Seneca's Norton Thompson Park on Monday night.

His first reaction?
"Oh my goodness, it works," Moulder said.

The lights, synced with music playing from speakers throughout Main Street, along with decorations and a new 32-foot Christmas tree, are part of a \$75,000 upgrade the city made through Hospitality and Accommodations Tax funds de-

signed to bring more people to the downtown area this holiday season.

After the lights were turned on in front of an estimated crowd of more than 600 before the start of the city's Christmas parade Monday, Moulder said he felt it had been a success.

"It has turned out to be more beautiful than I thought it would — it's very impressive," he said. "Seeing all the people taking pictures around the tree and all the presents, this is what it's about. This is the environment that we hope to create all season long.

"I was nervous that we would have a hiccup and maybe some-



The mastermind behind the city's new downtown Christmas light show, city administrator Scott Moulder admires the new Christmas tree on Monday.

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Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander welcomes local residents to the city's night of Christmas festivities Monday at Norton Thompson Park.



Members of the Seneca High School Army JROTC march in the Seneca Christmas parade on Main Street on Monday night.

LIGHTS: 'Moulder didn't let us down,' county councilman said

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thing would get unplugged and the connectivity wouldn't connect, or people wouldn't think it was as impressive as I did," he added. "But looking at everybody, I think they're enjoying it as much as I am."

Ashley Weston of Seneca was one of those getting pictures in front of the tree and said she was especially impressed that the lights are synced with the music.

"I like it," she said. "Over the years it has been the same, and oh gosh, look at this. It goes with the music. It's really nice,"

Charles and Rachel Lanning, who recently moved to Seneca, also enjoyed the lights as they took a selfie of themselves in front of the new tree.

"They did a great job out here," Rachel said. "It looks fantastic. It's like they coordinated with the music, which I can imagine took a very long time."

Brooklyn Craig, 11, added, "I like them because they're all pretty and all new."

Seneca events coordinator Riley Johnson said the lights and music will be on display each night from 5:30-9:30 p.m., adding "we may go a little later around Christmas-time."

"I think this is going to be a destination in our area," he said. "People will come here just to experience this great light show. The best part about it is it's absolutely free. We want people to bring their families, come and enjoy it, ride

through downtown Seneca, eat at one of our restaurants, get out and take some great pictures and just make it a magical season."

City recreation director Rick Lacey said that while the city did two trial runs of the unveiling of the lights, it was more exciting to see on Monday.

"We did a little test run, so we kind of knew (what to expect)," he said. "But what a treat for all the people in Seneca. This will bring a lot of people downtown."

Oconee County Councilman Paul Cain, who represents the Seneca area, said Monday's unveiling "totally lived up to the hype."

"Scott Moulder didn't let us down," he said. "I'm really proud of the city, city council and the mayor for

all they have done to promote what I think is the most important holiday of the year.

"I don't know of anywhere else in the Upstate that has a display like this, and I think it's going to be a great thing to bring people into downtown to build awareness about the great downtown that Seneca has and is building," Cain added. "It's just one more piece of our tourism toolkit to bring folks downtown."

Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander expressed his appreciation to Moulder and the city employees "who put so much work into the new lights and decorations downtown."

"I heard lots of great comments about the new lights downtown," he said.