



Statement from the Board of Directors September 24, 2021

For the 39th consecutive year, Vacaville's downtown will be aglow this holiday season, brightened by the Merriment on Main Christmas tree at the east end of Main Street.

"It would not be Christmas in Vacaville without the 50-foot beacon from Mt. Shasta illuminating our historic business district," said Richard Rico, president of the Board of Directors of Merriment on Main, a non-profit established in 2017 to ensure a legacy that began in 1983 continues.

The generous donations received from our sponsors thus far will allow our non-profit to purchase the tree and keep it lit and decorated through New Year's Day for the community to enjoy. It was made possible by the generosity of our sponsors: Recology, Triad-Lagoon Valley, McGuire Capital Real Estate, Maximum Fitness, Suihkonen CPA, Syar-Green Tree Development, Yin McDonalds, Pena Adobe Dental, Rapisarda Real Estate, The Opera House and Vacaville Convalescent & Rehabilitation Center. As well, it would not be possible without the assistance and support of in-kind sponsors -- The Reporter, Summit Crane, I-80 Forklift and the City of Vacaville.

What will not occur for the second consecutive year is a formal ceremony and downtown gathering that has attracted between 10,000 and 13,000 revelers in years past. The proliferation of COVID-19 and the likelihood of a new surge in cases this fall were deciding factors.

"The Board of Directors was unanimous in its decision to not hold an event that would encourage thousands of people to stand shoulder-to-shoulder for three city blocks" Vice President Jennifer Hamilton explained. "Given the organic nature of Merriment, we are unable to enforce state or local regulations for masking, proof of negative test results or distancing at the event. So to hold such a huge event with those limitations would be irresponsible at this time."

Even without a formal ceremony, Merriment on Main organizers encourage local residents to enjoy the community Christmas tree by visiting downtown businesses, restaurants and small special events planned during the 2021 holiday season.

For information on the various smaller events that can be enjoyed safely when visiting downtown between Thanksgiving and Christmas, visit vacavillefot.org, downtownvacaville.com and visitvacaville.com.

"The tree will continue to be a shining light at the end of Main Street and a symbol of the holiday season," Hamilton promised. "We couldn't do this without our sponsors to whom we are so thankful."

The non-profit's directors, comprised of business owners, city officials, public safety leaders and longtime volunteers, cited a host of factors that led to the decision not to hold the large-scale lighting ceremony:

- Public health officials and researchers agree that new infections will likely rise between now and late November as the Delta variant spreads and the annual flu season begins;
- Enforcing the mandate that those attending an outdoor event of more than 10,000 participants must show proof of vaccination or a negative test would be impossible;
- The small non-profit could not adequately insure itself and cover its liability should someone contract the virus at its event; and
- The magnitude of Merriment on Main is so much larger than current outdoor events, and therefore, would likely imperil the public's health.

"We've been advised that one of the biggest sources of uncertainty is whether winter — with its holiday parties, travel, indoor gatherings and cooler temperatures — will accelerate the current COVID surge," said Rico, who founded Merriment on Main four decades ago. "We never imagined we would be battling a pandemic for more than 20 months."

For more information and updates please visit us on Facebook or on the web at MerrimentonMain.org. Anyone interested in donating to help keep this tradition alive can do so via Venmo @MerrimentonMain.

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