



Signature Healthcare Brockton Hospital purchased 10,000 red Santa hats to distribute last week to every Brockton elementary school and Brockton High School student to try to smash the 700-person record of greatest number of people at one time in one place wearing a Santa Claus hat. From left, 12 year old Devyn Cain, of Brockton, 11 year old Talia Provenzano, of Brockton, 11 year old Elizabeth Lincoln, of Brockton, and 11 year old Noelle Brower, of East Bridgewater perform a celebration dance. While the official count has not yet been released, it is estimated that at least 800 people showed up. November 21, 2010

## Brockton Reclaims Santa Hats Record

-By Maria Papadopoulos-Posted Nov 22, 2010

BROCKTON — Kim Kateley donned her Santa hat and rushed downtown. She made the count by a mere two minutes. “I had to get here,” said Kateley, of Brockton, after dancing on Main Street once she heard the announcement made over a microphone that Brockton had set a new world record. She was among more than 800 people who organizers say wore Santa hats in downtown Brockton on Sunday, in a move to reclaim the city’s former Santa Claus hat-wearing record. In 2008, Brockton set the mark for people wearing a Santa hat at one time in one place at 507. But Mulligar, Ireland, seized the record last year when it got 700 people to wear the hats. After taking an unofficial count on Sunday, organizers said the city beat the Mulligar record.

“The city of Brockton is No. 1,” Kevin Brower, chairman of the Downtown Brockton Association, shouted to the crowd, which responded with several hoots and cheers. Organizer John Merian said the unofficial count is more than 800 – the amount of tickets that were given out at the event – but organizers will have a local accountant determine an exact count this week. “We took our record back,” said Merian, a member of the Greater Brockton Holiday Parade planning committee, who planned the Santa Hat Challenge.

The hat challenge is part of the committee’s efforts to celebrate Brockton’s history as the city with the first-ever department store Santa Claus, played in 1890 by James Edgar, owner of the downtown Edgar’s Department Store.

Many of the elementary schools in the area decorated the hats before Sunday. Olivia Caledonia, 8, of Brockton, was among city schoolchildren who wore a decorated hat. “(It’s) exciting!” she said. Katie and Phil Fleischer of Stoughton donned their Santa hats, as did their 7-month-old beagle, Tyke. “The dog wasn’t counted, but the humans were,” joked Katie Fleischer, daughter of Brockton Elections Commissioner John McGarry, who dressed up as Santa Claus for the event. And while hundreds turned out on Sunday, thousands more were expected.

Signature Brockton Hospital last week gave out 10,000 red Santa hats to Brockton’s public school students. Merian said 8,500 hats were distributed in the city’s elementary schools and 1,500 at the high school on Friday. “I don’t know if the full message went out there as far as coming downtown,” said Merian, who estimated about 10 percent of students with the hats would turn out. “There was a flier. He said he is optimistic more students would attend the event next year. “We have to continuously push this message,” he said.

The event closed off the one-block stretch of Main Street, at Crescent Street. Festivities began at 11:30 a.m. with DJ Joe Lupica playing holiday music. The official count happened in front of the parking garage at 1 p.m. At that time, the entire crowd turned in one direction to pose, wearing the hats, for the official group photograph. The crowd danced to the songs “YMCA” by the Village People and “We are the champions” by Queen.

Mayor Linda Balzotti said she was proud of the hundreds of residents who turned out. “It’s the City of Champions. I expected no less, so I am so proud of all Brocktonians who came out today to help us break this record,” Balzotti said. “It’s a great day in the city.”

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