

Holiday spirits soar at Open House ...

For the first time since 2006, the city of Anna Maria held a Christmas Open House and people came out in large numbers to walk through businesses, enjoy snacks and refreshments and mingle with each other in the old style Christmas spirit. Most shop owners reported a good turnout and lots of sales, while many shoppers were overheard saying they were in the shops along Gulf Drive and Pine Avenue for the first time. It was a time to think about shopping, but most of all, it was a time to walk around the city's main streets and visit with their neighbors – a tradition that isn't always part of our holidays anymore.

Here's a look at what went on inside and outside the stores of the city during the open house.



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Clockwise from above from left, members of the Roser Church Children's Choir, Joyful Noise, Tuna McCracken, Tyler Brewer, Fiona Turner-Leathem, Hannah McCracken, Sophia Belsito, Katie Krokroskia and Sydney Leechford, led by Roser Music Director Jim Johnston, entertained at the Island Historical Museum during the open house. Harpist Nancy Feely performs in front of The Loft/A.J.'s Island Network. Michael and Frank Coleman pose with Santa in his sleigh in the parking lot of the Sun Plaza. White Egret owner Barb Jaeger talks with Lee Little, who holds her Norwich terrier, Fritzzi. Members of the Anna Maria Island Concert Chorus and Orchestra performed at the Island Historical Society Museum.



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Right, The Loft/A.J.'s Island Network provided the grilled food. Left, Santa stands between penguins at the Anna Maria General Store and Deli. Above left, Max Outhwaith, from England, enjoys the snow at the Sun Plaza.