



From the Desk of Mayor Les Peterson
2017

Reasons for Changing to a Daytime Annual Carefree Christmas Parade

Carefree has received a number of questions inquiring about the reasons why the annual Christmas Parade was changed from a nighttime parade to a daytime parade. Be assured that this was a very considered decision, and was made only after substantial discussions with the Carefree/Cave Creek Chamber of Commerce, with whom Carefree partners sponsoring this parade, many local merchants, other municipalities and the police and others who manage traffic before and after the parade.

There were a number of factors supporting this change. On the positive side, most major parades take place during daylight hours - like the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade and the Rose Bowl Parade, to name a few. Most parades in small town America also take place during the mid-day hours for obvious reasons.

But, besides the popularity of daylight parades, there were also other pertinent factors that played into this decision to change the timing for the Christmas parade. These included:

- The decreased participation of lighted floats in Carefree's Christmas parade in recent years. From a peak of 19 lighted floats in the Christmas Parade in 2012, these had decreased to 6 in 2016. It is expensive and time consuming to construct a meaningful lighted float.
- Another reason was that for a nighttime parade, parade spectators had to arrive early to secure prime viewing locations, but in so doing they blocked access to our merchants for an entire Saturday afternoon.

But the most compelling, and controlling, aspect of our discussions and ultimate decision was *doing our best to enhance the safety of the many people viewing the parade* - and returning to their cars in darkness after the parade. Due to the overwhelming popularity of the Carefree Christmas Parade, there have been significantly more cars bringing people to view the Parade than could reasonably be accommodated in downtown Carefree parking spaces. This necessitated cars being parked on residential and commercial streets, sometimes as far a one mile away from the Parade.

Returning to cars in darkness after a nighttime parade is more dangerous than returning during daylight hours. Visibility on dark, unlighted streets is significantly less than during daylight hours. In recent years, the police would tell us about near accidents, such as after last year's Parade that of a car skidding to a stop within a few feet of a young family pushing a stroller as they returned to their car. The Town of Carefree just couldn't, in good conscience, continue a practice that brought on this higher level of risk to Parade spectators caused by the darkness.

Carefree definitely wanted to keep the Christmas Parade, but we wanted to make it as safe as possible. This was the primary reason the Town moved the Parade to 10:00 on the morning of the 2nd Saturday of December, the traditional date for the Carefree Christmas Parade. Our discussions with many other near-by towns supported the decision to move the Carefree Christmas Parade to a daytime execution. Other towns who have moved to daytime parades are experiencing greater participation of floats and spectators than their previous nighttime parades. The initial response to participation in Carefree's daytime Parade parallels the other towns. We are receiving greater levels of interest in participation in the Carefree Christmas Parade during daylight hours than we have seen in many years.

We are looking forward to building upon the Carefree Christmas tradition which has been a tradition for the last decade. Join us for a season long celebration of the Christmas Season running from December 1-23 and mark your calendar for the Carefree Christmas Parade at 10:00 on Saturday morning, December 9th.