

Spruced up for the holidays

Rockford's Christmas tree arrives downtown

By Kevin Haas
Staff writer

ROCKFORD — The centerpiece of Stroll on State was delivered to downtown Rockford on Tuesday on a flatbed semitrailer escorted by police.

The behemoth blue spruce — which stands about 40 feet tall and weighs more than 3,000 pounds — is the city's official Christmas tree. It was harvested Tuesday morning from the McGregor Road home of the Peyton family, which donated the tree for the annual Stroll on State festival, to be held Nov. 25. It took about four hours and the cooperation of four harvest and transport crews — Tree Care Enterprises Inc., R.L. Leek Industries, Creative Erectors and Stenstrom — to deliver the tree to its stand at West State and Wyman streets.

The tree requires a police escort because it's almost 14 feet wide and takes up more than one lane. Top speeds on the trek are about 20 miles per hour, said John Richards, president and owner of Tree Care Enterprises. Once downtown, the base of the trunk needs to be cut down from 36 inches to



John Richards, left, president and owner of Tree Care Enterprises, and his team install the city's official Christmas tree at West State and Wyman streets in downtown Rockford on Tuesday. [KEVIN HAAS/RRSTAR.COM STAFF]

fit its 15 ¼-inch stand.

"Now it looks like it's always been there," Richards said with a smile as he looked up at the spruce. "What's the big deal?"

Crews donate their time to harvest and place the tree.

"It's just one big positive thing for Rockford, which we need a lot of," Richards said.

The tree's arrival is "part of the excitement factor" for Stroll on State, said Josh Albrecht, director of marketing and public affairs for the

Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Next is decorating the tree and the rest of downtown Rockford, which will start at 8 a.m. Friday and continue Saturday. Volunteers can sign up to decorate at strollonstate.com.

"We're ready for it to be lit up and beautiful," Albrecht said.

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