

Times-Register

Westlake holds tree lighting

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WESTLAKE -- With the flip of a switch, six-year-old Grant Flowers ushered in the holiday season Dec. 1 during Westlake's annual tree lighting ceremony.

Grant, a kindergartener at Westlake Academy, helped Westlake Mayor Laura Wheat, turn on the lights as about 300 people gathered for the occasion.

The event included music and games by Radio Disney, visitors from the North Pole, cookie decorating, carriage rides, and performances by the Westlake Academy Primary Choral Group and the Secondary Theatre Group.

"This is a super event that brings the community together," said the academy's secondary principal Clint Calzini.

Bringing the community together is one reason the academy was built around an area known as the town green, said Troy Meyer, director of facilities and parks and recreation.

The grassy gathering area includes a large oak tree on a hill, left undisturbed during construction of the Academy.

In 2003, the first of three red cedars on the town green were planted to serve as the town's Christmas tree, Meyer said.

Meyer said the community plants one tree each year as part of a program that named the Town of Westlake a Tree City USA community.

"It was about 9-feet tall, now it's about 20," Meyer said.

And just as the trees continue to grow, so does the community.

"I was just thinking how big this event has gotten," said council member Rick Rennhack. "The school was built to build community ... I see people here who don't even have kids at this school."

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