

## **Santa comes to Ship Bottom to pick up mail**

**SHIP BOTTOM — ON TV:** The Ship Bottom Christmas parade will be shown on Comcast of Long Beach Island and Toms River from Dec. 21 through Jan. 2 and also on the Southern Regional School District channel at dates to be announced.

Just before the 31st annual Ship Bottom Christmas parade started Saturday, Santa Claus arrived in a U.S. Postal Service truck to pick up his mail at a special mailbox at the local post office.

Children crowded around, telling him what they want for Christmas: Nintendo DSi, iPod Touch and DQ Blizzard.

"It's a whole lot of fun," said Darcy Kolodziej of Ship Bottom, who brought her 5-year-old daughter, Ryann.

Her daughter didn't have to tell Santa what she wanted. "I have what I wanted already," she said. Kolodziej said that meant she already told Santa what she wants for Christmas — a dollhouse and a horse — and so doesn't have to tell him again.

Nicholas Guerriero, 5, of Surf City, wasn't saying what he wanted. "My list is too long to put in the newspaper," he said. His sister, Rylee, 2, was content with the sights and activity around her.

The parade, which had the theme "A Very Mermaid Christmas" this year, stepped off at 1 p.m. with floats, children, classic cars, marching bands and music, and lasted an hour and 15 minutes.

One participant, Melissa Green, 11, of Beach Haven Terrace in Long Beach Township, was honored for creating the winning postal cancellation stamp in a competition at Long Beach Island Grade School.

"It's a mermaid on a float holding a snow globe," she said. This was the first time Melissa was in the parade. She was driven by Borough Clerk Kathy Wells.

The special cancellation can be requested on mail, but only at the Long Beach Island Post Office in the Brant Beach section of Long Beach Township, for 30 days from Dec. 4, said Barnegat Light Postmaster Dorothy Mathis.

Carole Bradshaw, a resident who found the anchor from the wreck of the Fortuna sailing ship buried in sand — the same anchor that is now in front of Borough Hall — was the grand marshal.

Southern Regional School District brought cheerleaders, athletes and the marching band. The parade included rigs from local emergency rescue companies, and Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 74 was included, too. **The Labs4Rescue group marched with their Labrador retrievers.**

A fleet of classic DeLorean sports cars, with their doors raised up like gull wings, paraded again this year. The last one had faux antlers on its doors and a big red Rudolph nose attached to the front of the car.

Borough Council President Ed English noted that the weather was a lot better than last year, when the parade was held in a downpour. This year it was cold and windy.

"Christmas weather," English said. "The shops are open and they're doing well."

Carol and Dave Dagnell of Stafford volunteered at the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Relief truck, where they distributed free hot chocolate and chicken soup.

Santa, looking a lot like Sean Brazill of the North Beach section, brought up the rear of the parade in a Sea Ray boat on a float sponsored by the Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce. Santa said the island's weather isn't as cold as the North Pole, but next year he's going to wear long underwear and warmer gloves.