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Mount Clemens crowd welcomes in 2016 with fireworks and shopping

Stores, bars and diners packed on New Year's Eve

By Mitch Hotts, The Macomb Daily

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While hundreds of people spent New Year's Eve partying in bars and restaurants in downtown Mount Clemens, Marnie Rogish and her boyfriend were busy shopping.

Rogish and Joey Regaj moseyed through the Max & Ollie's Vintage Boutique, where they purchased a jewelry case before heading over to the Seeburger's Cheeseburgers diner for hot chocolate and take in the midnight fireworks display.

"We were looking for something to do tonight and we saw there were fireworks in Mount Clemens, so we drove up here," Rogish said. "But then we saw this cute little shop, and we had to come in here and look around."

The couple was among a steady stream of people checking out a handful of retail stores that were open late -- after midnight, in some cases -- on Thursday for the New Year's Eve crowd.

Max & Ollie's owner Diane Kubik and her staff not only agreed to hold onto customers' purchases while they attended the fireworks display, but they also cooked up a batch of homemade cookies in the shop for a little extra hometown touch for

customers.

"We usually close for the fireworks, so this is new for us tonight," Kubik said. "We've been pleasantly surprised."

It was a similar story at Paperback Writers Books/Weirdsville Records and Gemini Moon -- all located on Macomb Place -- where people ventured inside to check out the wares.

Likewise, at ABC Magic Shop, entertainer Warpo was demonstrated various tricks to crowds drifting in and out. Earlier, the shop hosted close to 500 people for family-oriented magic shows.

"Mount Clemens had a successful night tonight," shop owner Dave Schneider said. "Every restaurant was full, the Pirates Cove did well. We had families come in from as far away as Toronto and Livonia."

The fireworks capped off the 22nd annual Macomb County New Year's Eve Gala that featured live music from classic rockers Eastside Westside on an outdoor stage and fireworks at midnight to welcome in 2016.

All of the downtown's bars and restaurants were packed throughout the night, with many offering to show the Cotton Bowl college football game between Michigan State University and Alabama University on television. For the most part, the Spartans fans were a glum bunch as they watched their team get beat 38-0 by the Crimson Tide.

"We've got a Spartans crowd, so they're not too happy right now," said Charles Towner, co-owner of Madison's Pub, which had a full house. "But they'll feel better later."

Sure enough, after the game, the football crowd drifted out and new people took their spot, and before long, the entire bar was rocking with music and dancing.

It was a similar story around the downtown, with people enjoying food and drink at Little Lorraine's, Bath City Bistro, Abbibo, Fritt's Pub, Orleans Sports Cafe and other locales.

The bar crowd emerged outdoors as the clock neared midnight to enjoy the fireworks display.

Earlier in the night, the downtown was packed with people enjoying the fifth annual New Year's Eve in Never Never Land, a five-hour event aimed at families and featuring live entertainment, cartoon characters, a petting zoo, rides and a mini-fireworks display at 9 p.m.

Carrie Varner of Fraser brought her children out to the event because it provided a lot of things to do right before it was time for the kids to head home for the night.

"It's a great place to take the kids out to and still get home before the roads get crazy later on," she said. "We really enjoy it."

That's the goal, according to Steve Saph, chairman of the Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority. He said the DDA and its member businesses are always looking for ways to provide either free or affordable things for families to do on special occasions like New Year's Eve.

"The idea is to have safe, family events that also expose the public to our businesses in the downtown," Saph said. "I think tonight's turnout shows you that there is an appetite for these kinds of activities from families in our area."

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