

Pre-Christmas flight



Santa waves as he arrives Sunday at Smith Reynolds Airport in Winston-Salem.

ANDREW DYE/JOURNAL

Santa trades
reindeer for
private plane as
fly-in becomes
annual tradition

BY MELISSA HALL
Winston-Salem Journal

Santa Claus took time out of his busy Christmas schedule to fly into Smith Reynolds Airport Sunday afternoon. Jayla Williams, 9, excitedly waited for Santa just outside the terminal.

"I want a tablet, something crafty and Legos," she answered when asked what she wanted the jolly old elf to bring her.

About 125 children and 100 adults came out despite the rain to welcome Santa.

In the terminal, while they waited, the children — and some adults — played with balsa wood

airplanes and enjoyed hot chocolate and cookies. Some people would occasionally go outside to see if there was any sign of the plane.

Around 2 p.m. Santa arrived aboard North Pole 1, a Beechcraft Bonanza airplane, piloted by Jonathan Miller, the man in red's

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Santa

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personal pilot.

"I was making the sugar cake run. I went to the bakery at Old Salem to get Mrs. Claus' sugar cake," Santa said.

After Santa and the children recited the names of the reindeer, he told the story of how Donner and Blitzen got their names. Originally, the names were Donder and Blixem, the Dutch words for thunder and lightning. Over time, their names have become Donner and Blitzen.

Santa told the children that he made Mrs. Claus a promise this year.

"I promised her I wouldn't ask for a lot of cookies. So this year leave only one cookie." (He said his favorite cookie was Oreos.)

To alleviate any fear from children living in a home



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Nine-year-old Jayla Williams smiles as Santa arrives in an airplane at Smith Reynolds Airport on Sunday.

without a chimney, he explained how he gets into those houses.

"Years ago, the elves made magic keys." He showed them the key ring.

"I tap a key on a lock three times and the door opens."

Santa talked with all the children (and a few adults) who wanted to see him and got lots of requests.

Ashlyn Josey, 8, and her brother, Kenan Josey, 10, talked with Santa about what they wanted to find under the tree next weekend.

"I asked for a kayak," Kenan said.

year. We wanted to have something fun and free for the community," he said. "It's always on the Sunday before Christmas."

Earlier this season, Santa stopped by the preschool at Messiah Moravian Church and the students had something for him.

"I was going to the long-term care facility at the VA and the kids had brought

gifts in for the residents. It's good to see the young remember and revere the older ones and make sure they're remembered a Christmas," Santa said.

As Santa got ready to board the plane for the trip back, he was heard to say "It's good to fly in some thing with an enclosed cockpit."

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Ashlyn was a little more carefree, after all, she wrote her letter to Santa in invisible ink.

"I told him to surprise me," she said.

The Santa Fly-In is becoming an annual event.

Kaleigh Miller whose father, Jonathan Miller was Santa's personal pilot, said this was the fourth year of the fly-in.

"Three out of four have had bad weather," she said. "The weather last year was good."

Jonathan Miller started the fly-in as a community activity.

"It's been growing every