



WEST VALLEY — The third annual West Valley Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony will be held at 6 p.m. Dec. 7 in front of the Community Building on Main Street.

Santa Claus is expected to arrive by West Valley Volunteer Hose Co. fire truck to pass out candy canes and sing Christmas carols.

The West Valley Christmas Tree Lighting began two years ago with about 140 area residents. It grew larger last year, and promises to grow bigger yet this year, said Ashford Town Councilwoman Jean Bond.

Shortly after taking office three years ago, Bond said she thought it would be a good idea to start a Christmas tradition in West Valley. A Christmas tree lighting and visit by Santa Claus would make a nice family tradition, she thought.

As in most towns, the person who comes up with a good idea is often tasked with seeing that it gets carried out.

Bond even went out on the **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)** property with a representative to pick out a Christmas tree. As it turns out, the first tree they settled on was too big. It would have taken up all the room in front of the Community Building.

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A shop class at West Valley Central School built a tree stand, Bond said. The Ashford Highway Department will help lift the tree into place and secure it. The town crew will also help decorate the tree with lights.

"I think they'll put the tree up next Monday or Tuesday," Bond said.

Bond met with elementary school art teacher Lillian Lechner to come up with plans for students to make birdseed ornaments for the tree.

Before the tree lighting ceremony Dec. 7, Route 240 (Main Street) will be closed between School and Depot streets by fire police personnel. A detour is readily available, Bond said.

"This way everyone is safe from traffic," Bond said. "There's isn't enough room in front of the building for everyone without overflowing into the street."

The West Valley High School Chorus will sing Christmas carols to start things off, Bond said. Santa will come by fire truck and lead the countdown to lighting the tree.

State Sen. Catharine M. Young will also speak.

The Community Choir will lead a sing-along with several Christmas songs.

Girl Scouts and 4-H members will pass out hot chocolate and Christmas cookies.

The Community Center will be open in case of rain or snowy weather. "If it rains or snows, we can put the keyboard inside," Bond said.

"The first year we held umbrellas over the keyboard," she laughed. "That didn't work out