



Features

# Davis children perform annual Nutcracker show

📅 December 25, 2019   👤 Allyson Kang   💬 0 Comments   💎 Alicia Joo, Ann Smalley, Christopher Sortor, Daphne Roe, Jen Smalley, Kellen Smalley, Maya Sortor, Peyton Schoen

PHOTO: Audience members gather at the Veterans Memorial Center Theatre on Dec. 11 in support of the young performers

## Annual performance unites Davis community

By Alana Turner,

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Backstage, a young girl fidgets with the skirt of her snowflake costume. Group leaders scramble to make sure every last-minute detail is perfect. In the audience, parents whisper eagerly with their phones cameras in hand, ready for the action about to take place before them.

Everyone can feel there is something special in the air at the Veteran's Memorial Center Theater.

This familiar excitement and commotion is all part of the Davis Children's Nutcracker. Started in 1977, it is a long running tradition for many Davis families.

With available roles for kids as young as age six, many Davis residents grow up participating in the show and remember their experiences fondly, including the traditional holiday music, whimsical props and worn-in, well-loved costumes.

"I know a lot of kids in Davis that do it and they have lots of fun," 11-year-old Daphne Roe said.

Roe has the lead role of the Forest Fairy in the Davis Children's Nutcracker this year. Her performance entailed a choreographed ballet routine en pointe and a speaking part. In this small town, having a lead role in the production is a big

deal.

“I had always looked up to the leads, and wondered what it was like to be one. But now I *am* one,” Roe said.

Now that Roe is such a prominent aspect of the show, she realizes how much of a role model this makes her and her fellow leads to the younger cast members

“Kids from all different areas of Davis come together and work together,” said Ann Smalley, director of the Davis Children’s Nutcracker.

Anyone between the ages of 6 and 12 are welcomed, which leaves room for a variety of kids from different places and backgrounds to come together and meet each other. These kids spend many hours together and connect with each other through a shared love of performing onstage.

“You see the kids light up when they’re onstage and they have the biggest smiles ever,” junior Maya Sortor said. She is a long time Nutcracker leader.

“Everyone in the audience loves them and can’t wait to see them perform,” said sophomore Peyton Schoen, another leader.

Schoen has a history with the Nutcracker; during her childhood she has participated with the roles of a snowflake, gnome, clown, Arabian, pirate and most recently as the lead role of Clara’s mother.

This year, as a leader, she is in charge of Hawaiian dancers, and her job ensures everything with the children runs smoothly. Even though she isn’t onstage, Schoen and the other leaders’ roles behind the scenes are equally as crucial to the show, and Schoen still enjoys being a part of the special community.

“I think the Nutcracker is a big part of Davis history, and I’m happy to continue the tradition,” she said.

Just like how the cast members of the Nutcracker come

together for this event, so do their parents and loved ones.

“It’s not just about the kids in [the Nutcracker] it’s about the people who come to watch it,” Sortor said. The audience who attends the Nutcracker, consisting of supportive relatives and friends, are all there for the same reason: to see the kids they love smiling and having fun.

Sortor recalls a touching moment from her past experience as a Nutcracker leader. “There was a kid in my group whose family came all the way from Mexico to see them perform,” Sortor said. She explains how the gathering of these special people in the kids lives means a lot to them, making for an all-around happy, welcoming, and loving atmosphere for everyone involved.

“It would be very hard to go in and watch it, and leave not feeling better,” Smalley said.