



## **MARSHALL FESTIVALS, INC.**

### **BACKGROUNDER**

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In 1987, a small band of volunteers dreamed of the positive impact that a Christmas lighting festival could have on their struggling community. They enlisted the help of the City and Chamber and began what became a nationally recognized festival. These volunteers organized MFI and handed the reigns of the growing festival over to the MFI. Stagecoach Days, the city's heritage festival, was also brought under the MFI umbrella. For over 15 years MFI, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, has planned, promoted and coordinated Wonderland of Lights® and Stagecoach Days.

Marshall Festivals, Inc. (MFI), led by its volunteer board, annually produces both Wonderland of Lights® and Stagecoach Days for the Marshall community and our thousands of visitors. Partnering with MFI are the City of Marshall, the Marshall Chamber of Commerce, Marshall Main Street, Harrison County and many other local organizations and businesses. We could not be successful without their support.

#### **WONDERLAND OF LIGHTS**

A Christmas wish expressed in a 1987 *Marshall News Messenger* editorial will have illuminated the entire city for over 20 years. The editorial, published during poor economic times in East Texas, read, "Picture this. Marshall's square, every tree, every bush, decorated with tiny white lights; a gigantic Christmas tree decorated in tiny white lights; businesses around the square participating in the picture-perfect Christmas by decorating in tiny white lights."

Marshall native and former New York fashion model Wendy Russell Reeves responded with a generous donation and said to the editor "have your wish." That first year the editor, the city's assistant city manager and a small band of other volunteers fulfilled that wish stringing lights around the downtown square and on its 1901 courthouse.

In the following years, businesses and neighborhoods caught the spirit and Wonderland of Lights grew to be one of the largest Christmas celebrations in the United States. Now over 250,000 visitors make coming to Marshall a holiday tradition to ice skate, enjoy the lighted Christmas parade, tour historic homes and take the 45-minute driving tour through historic downtown neighborhoods and several outlying neighborhoods.

## **STAGECOACH DAYS**

StageCoach Days is Marshall's Spring Festival. It celebrates the city's role in transportation and the development of Harrison County. Enjoy a ride by horse and buggy and make a stop at Marshall's T&P Railroad Museum. This festival is complete with a car show and carnival. Participants enjoy a sea of arts and craft vendors and don't forget the best food East Texas has to offer.

### *FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT*

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