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## Symphony of Lights thrills young and old

Annual spectacle features a quarter-million lights and a shower of "snow" flakes

By **B.C. Manion**  
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The rocking chairs and benches began filling at least a half-hour before the 4th Annual Symphony of Lights was set to begin on a recent Tuesday night at The Shops at Wiregrass.

There was a chill in the air, as the spectators assembled.

Some arrived by strollers. Others came in wheelchairs. Many showed up in groups of four or five or more, with generations of families settling in to watch the show together.

By the time the spectacle began, hundreds of people were in the mall's center court.

The show is a dazzling display of flashing lights synchronized to tunes by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra and the Boston Pops Orchestra. During one of the songs, snowflakes - well, actually soap flakes - flutter down from the sky.

The star of the show is a 55-foot Christmas tree, which is flanked by two 25-foot trees. Trees throughout the mall are also lit up, with some programmed to go on and off.

The spectacle of lights and color is an obvious crowd pleaser. Little kids jump and dance, while parents and grandparents snap photos.

Before and after the show, people pose for photographs in front of the giant tree.

"I think it's vibrant. It's alive," said Rose Ponce, who lives in Lexington Oaks, a neighborhood in Wesley Chapel. "The kids love the snow. It's the closest thing they'll see to snow in Florida."

Ponce, 34, went to the show with her husband, Steven, and their two kids; her sister and her two kids; a friend and her two



Hundreds of people turn out to the "Symphony in Lights" show at The Shops at Wiregrass. The Wesley Chapel mall has been presenting a synchronized Christmas lights and music show every holiday season since it opened four years ago. (Photo by B.C. Manion)

kids; and, Ponce's mother.

"We've come here every year since it started," said Ponce. "Now that the kids are older, we'll be going at least once a week."

Her friend, Stacy Fisher, said her daughters "love the music. They love the snow."

"We come a couple of times a week," said Fisher, also 34. She lives in Meadow Pointe, another subdivision in Wesley Chapel.

Twenty-seven-year-old Stephanie Cruz -

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## Olympic feat

Wesley Chapel resident Brad Bouthot puts everything into power snatching 264 pounds to win the Soul Open in Miami on Nov. 20. The effort helped him win one of two Olympic weight lifting championships during November. (Photo courtesy of Bouthot) For complete coverage, see page 19.

## Heritage Ford gets a new name

Its owner also plans a new dealership next door

By **B.C. Manion**  
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Heritage Ford in Wesley Chapel has been renamed Parks Ford of Wesley Chapel, in a rebranding move that makes the dealership's name consistent with Parks Lincoln of Tampa - another dealership owned by Ron Parks, who is president of the dealerships.

The car dealership's owner is doing more than just changing the name of his Wesley Chapel dealership, though. He's also planning to construct a dealership specializing in Fiats and Alfa Romeos on a parcel east of the Ford dealership, which is at 28739 SR 54.

"We're in the permitting stages right now," said Terry Mullane, gener-

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