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Spectators get ready for Parade of lights

BY TONY RAAP

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Several hundred people stood shoulder-to-shoulder Friday evening along Lake Havasu's shoreline to watch a dress rehearsal for the 24th annual Parade of Lights. About 30 boats sailed in the practice run. For Lori Zeichick, Friday's rehearsal was almost better than the real thing. "I love it. It's bigger and better than last year," she said. Zeichick said this is her favorite event of the year. "The parade gets you going for the season," she said. "This is something you look forward to from year to year. And I'm glad it's big again because it was small last year." A record 45 entries are in this year's parade, up from 11 last year. In all, 62 boats will take part, parade chairwoman Tammy Kastelz said. Some spectators set up lawn chairs along Bridgewater Channel, while others strolled along the sidewalk, trying to get a better view. People were lined on both sides of the water from Rotary Beach to the English Village's north side. Many brought blankets and several started bonfires in the southwest channel near Lions Dog Park. The temperature was 39 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. The cold didn't seem to bother DeWayne Curbow, who was visiting from Alaska. He said he never thought it got this cold here. But he came prepared, bringing his winter jacket with him. Curbow was taking in the parade for the first time. "I think it's wonderful. I've never seen anything like it. It's kind of neat," he said. A few feet away, Darcia Rohrer, 9, sat on the grass with her legs scrunched up to her chin as the boats floated by. "It's really good," she said of the parade. She said she enjoyed the event because, "It's beside the lake and you can see all the boats." She said she would come to the real thing tonight at 6:30 to see her favorite boat. "I like the really, really, really big one," she said, referring to a 56-foot houseboat driven by Mike Boucher. "It had Santa on it."