



City of Wilmington

News from the Office of Mayor James M. Baker

For Release on Wednesday, November 21

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Vince Papale Serves as Grand Marshall of Wilmington Jaycees 44th Annual Christmas Parade

Parade to use Market Street route beginning at 10:00 a.m. on November 23

Former Philadelphia Eagle Vince Papale, who in 1976 became the oldest rookie in the history of the NFL and later inspired the 2006 Disney movie "Invincible," will be honored as the Grand Marshall of the 44th Annual Wilmington Jaycees Christmas Parade. The theme of this year's Parade will be "A Sports Christmas" in honor of Papale and former Howard High School Basketball Star A.J. English, who will also appear. The World's Largest Santa Balloon will make its way along the parade route, along with local and visiting marching bands.

The Parade will travel along Market Street this year now that improvements to the Downtown District's main thoroughfare have been completed. The Parade will start at 10:00 am at 5th and Market Streets and proceed north on Market Street to 12th, where it will turn southeast for one block to King Street. The Parade will then proceed from 12th Street south on King Street, past the Grandstand at Rodney Square before ending at 5th and King Streets. This annual event, traditionally held on Black Friday, is designed to bring the community together and to promote economic development in downtown Wilmington.

"The Wilmington Jaycees believe that this year's parade will be one to remember," said Parade Chairman Mark A. Oller. "We are pleased to honor two sports stars. In addition, we'll have six bands, including the 250-member Lakeville North High School marching band from Minnesota."

The parade will feature community groups who dance, sing, cheer, and march. In addition to Lakeville, there will be marching bands from A.I. du Pont, Salesianum, and Cab Calloway, as well as two string bands from the Philadelphia area. Popular TV and movie stars Sponge Bob Square Pants, Blues Clues, Bob the Builder, Elmo, Cookie Monster, Spiderman, Winnie the Pooh, and Tigger will be on hand. Of course, the star of the show will continue to be Santa Claus. Children at the parade are encouraged to write a letter to Santa and have it collected by Santa's elves who will be walking the parade route. For children who provide their address, the Wilmington Jaycees will work with Santa and his elves to make every effort to answer each letter. The Grand Opera House, the Downtown Business Association, and Three Little Bakers are proud to bring Santa and Mrs. Claus to the Grand Opera House after the parade to talk to children and pose for pictures.

Vince Papale was a 1964 graduate of Interboro High School where he was a three-sport varsity letter winner. He went on to St. Joseph's College on a full athletic scholarship and graduated with an MS Degree in marketing/management in 1968. After graduation, Vince taught middle school business education for seven years in the Interboro School District while also coaching two sports. In 1974 and 1975, Vince was a wide receiver for the Philadelphia Bell of the WFL. In 1976, at age 30, Vince tried out for the Philadelphia Eagles and made the team, becoming the oldest rookie in the history of the NFL. He played for four seasons before a shoulder injury ended his career in 1979. In 2006, his inspiring story made the big screen as Disney produced "Invincible." In 2007 Papale was voted the most outstanding special teams player in the 75-year history of the Eagles. Vince is currently a marketing executive and special projects director for Sallie Mae. Vince is married to the former Janet Cantwell; they reside in Cherry Hill, NJ with their two children, Gabriella and Vincent.

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A.J. English was a 1986 graduate of Howard High School. He was the 1986 Delaware High School "Player of the Year," 1986 McDonald's All-American, 1986 Gatorade All-American, and 1986 Converse All-American. English attended Virginia Union University from 1986-1990 averaging 33.4 points per game his senior year. He was the NCAA 1990 Division II "National Player of the Year," and was the nation's leading scorer in 1990. English was the 37th overall pick in the 1990 NBA draft and played for the NBA Washington Bullets from 1990-1992 and later for the Portland Trailblazers. He also played in Europe for nine seasons. English is currently working for All Pro Sports & Entertainment as Director of Basketball Operations.

The City of Wilmington has announced that there will be free or discounted parking in the City for the Parade:

- The Wilmington Parking Authority is offering free parking at two surface lots—8th & Orange Streets, and 6th and Orange Streets. Vehicles must enter after 9 AM and exit before 3 PM.
- At the Customs House Garage under the Doubletree Hotel on King Street, parking is being offered at a flat \$3.00 rate if you enter after 9 AM and exit before 3 PM.
- The Ships Tavern Garage (2nd and King Sts.) and the Midtown Garage (9th and Shipley Sts.) are both offering a flat parking rate of \$3.00 to vehicles entering after 9 AM and exiting before 3 PM.

Friday, November 23 also marks the beginning of the City's FREE Downtown Holiday Parking Program to encourage shoppers to support Downtown businesses. On-street metered parking is free in two-hour intervals every day after 12 Noon in the Downtown Business District, beginning the Friday after Thanksgiving through New Year's Day.

For over 66 years, the Wilmington Jaycees has been a leadership development organization for individuals ages 21-40 who are interested in improving themselves, meeting new people, and helping their community. For additional information on the Wilmington Jaycees or the Parade, including broadcast dates and times, please check www.wilmingtonjaycees.com or call the Jaycees Office at 302-655-5288.

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