

## Santa and Mayor set Winterval ball rolling!



Conor Murphy (age 5) Jack Murphy (age 6) and Ronan (age 3) Pictured at the opening weekend of Winterval. See [www.winterval.ie](http://www.winterval.ie) for more. | Photo: Patrick O'Leary

Thousands of children and their parents thronged John Roberts Square on Friday evening to watch Santa Claus and Mayor of Waterford City and County Adam Wyse switch on the city's Christmas lights and launch the Winterval festival.

The Grinch was hot on Santa's heels but was thwarted by the security team. Before the Mayor gave a brief speech, Santa Claus had the children sing Jingle Bells for him just so he could ad lib the last line, "on a Déise open sleigh!"

Speaking to the assembled crowd Mayor Wyse said: "thanks very much to every single one of you for coming out and supporting Waterford and Winterval, one of the most important festivals we have each year. I really hope it's a continued success. I'm so proud to be Mayor of this city and county full of people that support their own."

Speaking to The Munster Express after the event he went on to say that it was "brilliant for the people of Waterford to have the opportunity to come out to celebrate the launch together. It's fantastic to see people feeling so positive and passionate about their city.

Reflecting on a bittersweet week for Waterford he shared his memories of the late Billy McCarthy and urged people to be kind to others this festive season saying "Christmas is a joyful time for many, but can be very tough for others."

Santa wasn't the only children's favourite in attendance. Absent from our streets of late following the recent spate of clown scares, Ronald McDonald made a welcome return to public life. Dressed in his famous yellow, red and white striped costume, he delighted children with balloon modelling and posed for countless selfies.

An RTÉ Nationwide special on Christmas in Waterford City and County will air on Monday 5th December.

See [www.winterval.ie](http://www.winterval.ie) for more.