

Long before the badge rose in “Mayberry” and the ball dropped in Times Square, the stately walls of Mount Airy Museum of Regional History were rocking with local pre-schoolers and parents celebrating the arrival of 2025. This included the customary countdown toward the arrival of the new year, which those gathered on the third floor of the museum observed at 12 o’clock sharp. Only it was 12 as in noon, with the official arrival of New Year’s Day in the Eastern Time Zone still a dozen hours away.

Which Mount Airy Museum of Regional History was scheduled to do at midnight Tuesday in its courtyard area with the raising of a replica sheriff’s badge honoring the Andy Taylor character. The pre-schoolers got a head start on that with the Noon Year’s Eve Celebration Party, which began at 11 a.m.

“We’ve got 35 in here today,” said museum Director of Education and Programming Seth Gibbons. Looking around the swirl of festivities on the third floor Tuesday, the event seemed just like any other New Year’s Eve party. The kids wore hats and Mardi Gras-type beads as they tooted horns and danced to music provided by local DJ Blanton Youell which resounded throughout the facility. There were flashing lights, screens showing videos and even a bubble machine, among other attractions.

“Our project goal is to provide the young kids with something to do on New Year’s Eve,” Gibbons said of the fact that midnight is after their bedtime. “It’s giving them something to celebrate.” The Noon Year’s Eve party was climaxed with a customary countdown to 12, when an avalanche of balloons cascaded from the ceiling as everyone cheered.

But did the pre-schoolers really appreciate any philosophical concepts surrounding another 365-day period emerging and the sentimental significance of that ala “Auld Lang Syne?” “They don’t,” said Barbara Blood of Mount Airy, who was attending the event for the first time with her grandsons Trevor, 4, and Trace Hudson, 3. “This is a play time,” Blood said of their main motivation, not unlike what adult celebrants would do later that day.

