

Winners

(cont. from page 1)

has a rocket of his own, so maybe, just maybe, Santa and his reindeer will visit us on this trip!

It's a few days until Christmas and we are boarding the spaceship. They call it "Supernova 17" because it can travel a lightyear in one minute! I board the ship with my parents and we are amazed. The ship is very spacious and our spacesuits are in front of us waiting to be worn. We put them on and buckle up preparing for take off in the snowy landscape outside of the ship. As the astronauts work their magic we hear a countdown. "5...4...3...2...1...preparing for space travel." And WOOSH! The Supernova takes off and my parents and I are suddenly miles high up in the sky! The stars look wonderful, and Earth is arguably more beautiful from space.

It's Christmas Day! We've flown past Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus. Neptune is the last. We hope Santa will be able to travel all the way here, because if not, my parents say I won't get any presents. As we get closer to Neptune we look out the window and see Santa! But he seems to be aimlessly floating through space. Is he in trouble? We hopelessly stare until we have an idea. We tell the astronauts to go back and they do so. As we approach at a slower than usual speed, I gear up in my spacesuit and prepare to save Santa.

I hop out of the ship and a tether is the only thing keeping me from drifting out to space. I approach Santa and his sleigh of reindeer and ask what happened. Santa explains that his rocket ran out of fuel and all of his reindeer were tired, rendering them unable to pull the sleigh. I pull Santa's sleigh towards our ship. As I latch onto the ship using the tether that was pulling me I tie it to the sleigh. I head back inside and relay the information to my parents and we fly back home to Earth.

Once we get to Earth and land, we've officially saved Santa and his reindeer! As a reward San-

ta gives us all of the cookies and milk he's gathered. Keep in mind, this is A LOT. As we head home in our flying car we are satisfied with our Christmas. My parents are planning on doing this next year, albeit without saving Santa!

Grades pre-K-3 First Place

Santa and the Forgotten House

By Tanner Whitt

While the Elf and Santa were flying away from the last kid's house. They realized that they missed a house. When they got back to the North Pole, they were shocked. Santa said, "Oh, no! We missed a house! What are we going to do!?" The elf replied, "It's fine. We will just go back."

Santa and the Elf agreed and decided they had to go back to the kid's house for sure. The kids had to have presents. The Elf realized it was sunrise. The Elf shouted, "Oh, no! What are we going to do now that it's almost day light?" Santa said, "Don't worry! I carry the disguises and the parachute at the back of the sleigh." So, they hurriedly changed clothes and jumped out of the sleigh.

Santa was dressed as a mailman and the Elf was dressed as a kid. Since it is sunrise, if they don't get to the kid's house by 8:00 AM they will be in trouble. Oh, and also, I don't know why but Santa has a motorcycle in his sleigh as well. The Elf and Santa drove the motorcycle to the kids house with a bag full of presents. When they got to the kid's house, the time was 7:48 AM. They needed to work fast. Santa guarded the house while in mailman clothes and the Elf changed into his Elf clothes. The Elf snuck into the house and climbed onto the shelf so that he could watch out for the boy while Santa brought in the presents.

Santa got all the presents into the house and placed them under the beautiful Christmas tree. Santa used his magic to teleport the Elf and himself back to sleigh where they drove off to the

North Pole. They arrived at the North Pole. The Elf was so relieved, but Santa wasn't because he remembered something. Santa yelled, "THE BOY HAD A SISTER!!!!!!!"

Second Place

Christmas Cookies

By Meredith Pilson

Down the hallway I go
To make cookies with dough.
Sugar, eggs, flour, and butter
I can't wait to pick my favorite cutter.
So sugary and sweet
These cookies can't be beat.
Add some sprinkles on top
I can't wait for Santa to stop.

Third Place

The Christmas the Grinch was Good!

By Jackson Boyd

Once upon a time on Christmas Eve, there was snow on the ground! The Grinch was waking up on this cold morning and rolled over to say morning to Max. Max was the Grinch's dog. Max had an idea and started wagging his tail. The Grinch said "tell me Max." Max was thinking that not everyone gets Christmas presents because their parents could not afford them.

Max the dog thinks that the Grinch should buy the kids presents. The Grinch says "no way Max." Then Max reminds the Grinch how it use to feel not to get anything. The Grinch started to think!

As the day went on, he couldn't help but think about those kids. Then he says "Max you were right, we should buy the kids some presents." Max told the Grinch "let's get going, we only have a little time." They went and got alot of presents! They knocked on everyone's door in town to make sure that everyone had a present under the tree!

But remember, it's not about what's under the tree, it's about the birth of Jesus and spending time with family! Merry Christmas!

Ye Olde What-Not Shoppe

(cont. from page 1)

low because I can," she said.

Tramonte credits her business partner, Tim Lucas, for helping launch the store. Lucas, who also operates God's Torches Inc. in the shop's basement, assisted with moving and setting up furniture.

Gov. Adds \$290 Million to School Construction Budget, Totaling \$700 Million for Biennium

Gov. Glenn Youngkin has announced an additional \$290 million in funding to support school construction and modernization efforts across Virginia, bringing the biennial budget total to \$700 million. State investments in school infrastructure since he took office have reached nearly \$2 billion, leveraging local and federal funds to generate an estimated \$3.4 billion in total funding.

"Over the last three years, we have invested historic amounts in our education system, including our public school facilities," Youngkin said. "Our record economic growth and the resulting surplus allows us to make this critical investment to ensure every Virginia student has access to high-quality school facilities that support academic success."

The \$290 million in additional non-general funds will expand competitive grant opportunities for school divisions in high-need areas, addressing critical infrastructure issues and ensuring safer, more conducive learning environments for K-12 students across the Commonwealth.

"One of our guiding principles since day one of the Youngkin Administration has been to provide safe, vibrant, and healthy learning environments for all of our students," said Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera. "This investment in supporting new and refurbished school buildings makes it possible for every community in the Commonwealth to have the means to provide a best-in-class education that prepares every student for success in our increasingly demanding knowledge- and skills-based economy."

The additional funds build on a series of education-related investments during Youngkin's term, reflecting his administration's focus on modernizing school infrastructure while fostering academic excellence statewide.

"He's a contractor, so we came together on this, and he has been like an angel for me. He's moved all this furniture in, he did it all single-handedly, and he has contributed a fair amount in the furniture area," she said.

The furniture on display, much of it for sale, largely came from Tramonte's personal collection.

"For the time being, it's a type of downsizing. I have been a collector since 1970 when I opened my first store," she said, recalling her experience importing antiques from France.

Tramonte shared a story about a shipment of antiques that sank in Baltimore Harbor due to a lack of insurance. She speculated about the possibility of piracy being involved, which she said was not uncommon at the time.

The shop will soon expand to include the Book Nook Café, which Tramonte aims to open in the first quarter of 2025.

"It's going to be in the back of the building, and we've got a little area for stools where people can come and sit and gather and have some espresso," she said.

The café will serve a variety of espressos and

lattes, including a signature Cuban espresso, café Cubano. Desserts will also be on the menu.

In addition, Tramonte is working with the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to offer a limited Happy Hour on Fridays and Saturdays, aligning with events at the nearby Star Theatre.

Community Classes and Events

A ceramic sculpture artist, Tramonte plans to offer monthly sculpture workshops starting in 2025. As a nonprofit, the classes will be free, though attendees will need to cover the cost of materials such as glaze, clay, and kiln use.

Once Ye Olde What-Not Shoppe joins the Patrick County Chamber of Commerce, Tramonte hopes to host a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Ye Olde What-Not Shoppe is open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

For more information, visit the store's Facebook page at Facebook.com/YeOldeWhat-NotShoppe or call (276) 288-4469. Those interested in sculpture workshops can email Tramonte at ttramonte@yahoo.com.



Ye Olde What-Not Shoppe is open Tuesday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is closed on Sundays and Mondays.



The shop features a variety of vintage treasures, and a new addition — the Book Nook Café — will hopefully open in early 2025.

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Stuart Council

(cont. from page 1)



Outgoing Mayor Ray Weiland (left) ceremoniously passed the torch to Mayor-elect Terry Dalton.

messages, different colors,” Simmons said.

The sign violates several of the town’s zoning codes, including a provision against flashing or intermittent lights.

“Any flashing sign or device displaying flashing or intermittent lights or lights of changing degrees of intensity, except a sign indicating the time and/or temperature alternating on not less than on a five second cycle.”

Simmons noted the sign’s scrolling messages were difficult to read while driving, further complicating the matter. “Because as you’re passing, you couldn’t read the full message,” he said.

Simmons said issues with the sign were brought to the town’s attention by Allen and Kathryn Ziegler, who are property owners adjacent to the sign. The Ziegler’s sent a letter to the town on December 10 and included three zoning codes they believed the sign was in violation of.

“From the letter he (Allen Ziegler) basically states that, ‘the bottom line of the discussion was that we were directly asked by the Planning Commission what compromise we would be willing to offer. While we reluctantly offer resolution, it is our position that we should not bear any responsibility in determining what we would be willing to accept regarding the sign violations. It is the responsibility of the town’s governing bodies to ensure fair enforcement of zoning codes and not to place an infringed property owner in the position to negotiate compliance



Stuart Town Manager Bryce Simmons presented Mayor Ray Weiland with an award in recognition of his years of service to the town.

in front of an audience of nonsuppurative parishioners,” Simmons said.

From the discussion and cooperation of the Planning Commission, Simmons said it came up with three conditions of approval for the sign to receive a special use permit.

The conditions are the automatic shutoff of the sign daily at 8 p.m., each message displayed on the sign remains stationary for a minimum of five seconds before transitioning to the next message, and the sign’s brightness being set to its lowest setting to mitigate any light pollution or visual disruption to the surrounding area.

“Based off of my understanding of the sign’s zoning the biggest thing was obviously the five second transition because we do have in our ordinance that any message should be displayed for a minimum of five seconds. So that to me, that made it more in compliance with the zoning as written,” Simmons said.

Since the recommendations were made, Simmons said they are being met by the Church.

“The sign cuts off at 8 p.m., and honestly you can’t even see the sign after the lights cut off. I believe that the message displaying for five seconds does allow people that are passing by to get that quick information that they’re looking for, and the brightness level is definitely much more



Several members of the New Life Community Church attended the Wednesday, December 18 Stuart Town Council meeting.



Stuart Town Council and staff at the final meeting in 2024.

maintained based off of the original observation of it,” he said.

Mayor Ray Weiland said he wanted to hear directly from the Zieglers how they feel about the compromise the Planning Commission came up with.

“Looking at the letter, I’m not sure if they would say that would be ultimately reasonable,” he said.

While he doesn’t want to speak on the Zieglers behalf, Simmons said it was apparent at the Planning Commission meeting that removal of the sign was the only thing they felt was appropriate.

“I do feel based off of the recommendations that we can approve the sign under a special use permit. If any of those conditions fail to be followed, then we would have reason to have additional enforcement,” he said.

Councilmember Jeff Houchins also suggested the Church should look at having the sign set to automatically turn on and off with the sunrise and sunset.

“Kind of appease a little bit on some of the anxiety from the light that they’re complaining about,” Houchins said.

As they are unsure if a public

hearing is required to approve the sign’s special use permit, the council decided to revisit the matter at the January 15 meeting.

However, for a special use permit, Weiland said ideally the council should hold a public hearing.

“And have the Zieglers come in and give their side of the story certainly and go from there. The compromise that the Planning Commission came up with I think is a good one. I certainly agree with what they’ve established here,” Weiland.

The meeting marked the final session for Weiland as mayor. He was recognized for 23 years of service on the council, including 12 years as mayor. Town Manager Bryce Simmons presented Weiland with an award in his honor.

Mayor-elect Terry Dalton will assume the role in January.

- The council also:
- *Approved a resolution for the Downtown Revitalization Project.
 - *Discussed One Family Production’s year-end review.
 - *Approved meeting minutes.
 - *Heard updates on public works projects and town policies.
 - *Approved bill payments.

Grover Roark

(cont. from page 1)

not just be words put together,” he said.

He also recounted that his uncle wanted him to go to Nashville with him and sing to perform with famed country music figure Ralph Emery. “My uncle liked to drink too much; I couldn’t handle that,” Roark said, explaining why he declined the invitation.

One particularly memorable Christmas in the 1930s came with an unusual twist. Roark’s father made a promise to the family: if their cow “came fresh” — a term for giving birth and producing milk — they would take a trip to Virginia Beach. Hoping for the trip, young Roark remembers sit-

ting on a stump and praying earnestly for the cow to come fresh.

And so, it did. His father kept his word, and the family went to the beach for three days, crossing on the ferry and spending the night in a Richmond hotel on the return trip.

“The Good Lord has blessed me,” Roark reflected. “I don’t ever feel bad, don’t get sick, live alone, still work, and drive wherever I want to go.”

Roark, who lives in Sandy Ridge, N.C., leads an active life. He tends to a garden, keeps honeybee hives, and sells his produce and honey from his booth at the Patrick County Farmers Market. A man

of simple pleasures, he finds joy in church, gardening, and reading.

“I don’t like TV,” he admitted.

Roark worked for General Mills for 32 years and six months without missing a single day. He and his wife, who passed away along with one of their two sons, built a life defined by hard work and faith.

Despite his age, Roark said it is unbelievable that he is doing as well as he is at his age, “My bones are wore out, so I can’t walk too good and I can’t hear too good.”

Otherwise, he is doing well, as he was told at a recent doctor’s visit. There, his physician marveled at his vitality, predicting he could live another 20 years. Roark’s re-

sponse?

“I told the doctor he was wrong. I’m going to live 40 more years.”

Roark credits his longevity to a daily spoonful of honey, a ritual he believes has been key to his health.

As Christmas approaches, Roark feels both festive and content. For him, the holiday season serves as a reminder of the blessings life offers — if we take the time to appreciate them.

What a treasure and what assurance it is that Christmas is coming. Blessings are near to all of us if we just take a few minutes to consider it.

Jane Fulk

(cont. from page 1)

bers while in executive session, “but when they came out of executive session and worked on what needed to be worked on for Patrick County, they worked for Patrick County’s good, not for their own agenda or the agenda of their buddies.

“I don’t remember a time that Lock Boyce put on his podcast anything derogatory about one of the board members,” she said, adding that the current board has sometimes handled situations unprofessionally, while other times they’ve been on target.

While there have been low points throughout her entire time on the board, Fulk said the lowest was perhaps in the last two months. “I didn’t feel like we were working together for a goal for Patrick County,” she said, adding that she believes “each one of them has the potential to do good for Patrick

County, and I would like for them to do that. I really would.

“My biggest hope is that all the board will work together towards a common goal, and will be able to work with county administration towards the same goal,” Fulk said.

In retrospect, Fulk said she wishes she’d had more time to work with the Economic Development Authority (EDA) and help plot a path forward to attract economic growth in the county. “Without it, we’re in bad shape. Everything can’t rely on taxpayer money, personal and property tax money. You have to have businesses, and you have to have some growth,” she said.

Fulk added she hopes the hospital reopens under the new owners, even if it’s not exactly the model the county had before.

“If we can have something, it would help with our paid EMS (Emergency Medical Service) ser-

vice and our volunteer EMS service,” she said.

While she came onto the board wanting to work with the other supervisors and help out, Fulk said she didn’t know if the board accomplished anything. “I hope I’ve been able to direct a little bit, I don’t think I done as much as I would have liked to have done,” she said.

When she looks back on her time as the interim supervisor in the Dan River District, Fulk said she will think about the fact the county was in fairly good financial shape.

“Right now, as far as monetary goes, it has been in the best. When I came on the board in 2018, our carryover funds were \$2 million. The carryover funds for this year were \$11 million,” she said. “I cannot say how it will be in June 2025, but when I came on the board this time, the financial shape was good.”

Following the November meeting, Andrew Overby assumed the position of Dan River District supervisor. Fulk said she believes Overby will serve the district and the county well.

(While we take time to celebrate the season with our loved ones, we hope you enjoy this story, originally published in December 2023)

Patrick Pioneers

Stuart Cotton Mill

By Beverly Belcher Woody

This week’s column leads me to more questions, rather than finding answers. I have been unable to find much information about the Stuart Cotton Mill and was wondering if any readers had heard stories from families that worked there in the early 20th century? The cotton mill was located below Stuart Elementary School on what is now Oakhurst Drive.

The Danville Register & Bee, November 19, 1921, edition stated, “It is currently reported here that the Stuart Cotton Mill has been sold to the Patrick Land and Development Company and that it will be leased to a concern in High Point, North Carolina which plans its’ operation as a knitting mill. The deed of sale is expected to be

executed this week. The mill has never been operated, although at one time, machinery was placed in it for the manufacture of cotton goods.”

Cindy Griffith wrote that the Stuart mill was part of the Schoolfield division of Dan River Mills but closed when the Great Depression hit the community. Lawrence Burton stated that county fairs were held across from the cotton mill in the 1940s.

An article in the 12th of September 1931 edition of the Roanoke Times stated, “Meetings are being held here this week by business and professional men of Stuart in an attempt to raise \$12,000.00 to purchase and repair the old cotton mill building. The Jobbers Pants Company, a firm that has been operating in Martinsville for sev-



Stuart Cotton Mill, from Curtis Carter Collection

eral years, desires to open a unit in Stuart and the new plant will require a building, for the use of which, the pants company will pay 7% interest for rent. The only building available in Stuart is the cotton mill, which can be bought and repaired for \$12,000.00.” Did this deal ever pan out? I can’t find where Jobbers ever operated in Stuart.

Sandy Rodgers recalls going to the mill with his mother and grandmother while they were shopping for piece goods; this would have been around 1950.

If anyone has more information about the Stuart Cotton Mill, I would love to hear about it. Woody may be reached at rockcastlecreek1@gmail.com or 276-692-9626.

Social Security Matters

By Russell Gloor, National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Ask Rusty – Have I Saved Social Security Money by Claiming at 62?

Dear Rusty: I had to start collecting Social Security at 62, and I am 75 now. I believe that in the last 13 years I have saved Social Security money, so I do not know why I cannot draw my full benefits now.

If I had started drawing at 65 at \$1,200 per month, then I would have drawn \$16,400 per year. Instead, I got \$680 per month from 62 to 75, or \$8,160 per year, or about \$106,000 over 13 years. Compare that to the age 65 amount of \$14,400 per year for 10 years, which is \$144,000. So, by claiming at 62, at age 75 I have saved the government over \$38,000. It would make seniors lives so much easier if they could draw full Social Security at 75 years old, after getting only part of their SS. Signed: Second-guessing

Dear Second-guessing: The difference between benefits claimed at various ages causes many to reflect, as you have done, about what might have been had you waited longer to claim. But there is an error in your calculations. If your age 62 monthly benefit is \$680, your age 65 monthly benefit would have been about \$845, not \$1,200. Thus, at 75 you would have collected about \$101,400 by claiming at 65, vs. the \$106,000 you have received by claiming at age 62. In other words, you still would not have bro-

ken even had you claimed at age 65.

Social Security says that it doesn’t matter when you claim – they say that if you claim early your payments will be less, but you’ll get more of them. Where SSA’s argument falls apart is when life expectancy is longer. Our experience is that if you wait until your full retirement age (FRA) to claim (which is age 66 in your case), vs. claiming at age 62, you will collect the same amount of total money at about age 78. In other words, the “breakeven age” for waiting until FRA to claim is about 78. So, you will reach your personal “breakeven age” in about 2 ½ years (at age 78). And this is precisely why we encourage everyone to understand their life expectancy when deciding when to claim Social Security – those who expect to live longer will, indeed, get more SS money if they delay claiming.

Your benefit is determined by your age when you claim, and if you claim before your FRA your monthly amount is permanently reduced. If you claimed at age 62 and your monthly amount was \$680, then in the four years until you reached age 66 (your FRA) you would have received about \$32,640. If you had, instead, waited until your FRA to claim, your benefit at age 66 would have been about \$906/month. Collecting \$906/month (at 66) vs. \$680/month (at 62) would make your breakeven age about 78. If you claimed at age 65 instead of 62, your breakeven age would have been about a year earlier (77).

So, have you saved Social Security money? Up to this point, you have not. Since you claimed at

age 62, you have collected about \$680/month for 13 years until you were 75 (or about \$106,000). If you had waited until age 65 to claim you would have, instead, collected about \$101,400 – in other words you have received more, so far, by claiming at age 62. But that will change when you reach 77 (your breakeven age, had you claimed at 65). Starting at age 77, you will have received less in cumulative lifetime benefits because you claimed at age 62. Which, again, is why – at the AMAC Foundation’s Social Security Advisory Service – we encourage everyone to consider life expectancy when deciding when to take Social Security. Of course there are other factors too, not the least of which is financial need, but life expectancy is key. And since the benefit you get when you claim is permanent (except for annual Cost of Living Adjustments), deciding when to claim Social Security is a decision which affects a lifetime.

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Growth Through Adversity: How to Be Happy

Do you wish you were happy all the time? What if true happiness meant you weren’t happy during all times of the day? Perhaps it sounds outlandish to be happy under adversity, conflict, and pain, but there may be a different meaning to true happiness altogether. We may have been conditioned all our lives to believe that happiness is a destination and one that is achieved once “all our ducks are in one row”.

I would like to share how happiness is a journey, and how it goes beyond gratifying our own selves, but how it involves growing as a person and finding contentment in life.

True happiness is not about avoiding hard times but knowing how to respond to adversity. It involves the kind of hope that knows that the outcome may not be perfect but accepts and is okay with results, regardless.

Firstly, understand that a direct result of pain is a clouded mind. I don’t know about you, but when my mind is clouded, it is even more painful to think. At this moment, it is important to rest and trust God. Allowing your mind to dwell on

positive things; the blessings God has granted you in your life, and ultimately His love, does wonders to the mind. Since 9 out of 10 diseases starts from the mind, there is clearly an intimate relation between the body and mind. The mind is a powerful thing.

Stay Active

I know it all too well; if you are in emotional pain or depression, the last thing you desire to do is go out for fresh air and engage in activity. Exercising, engaging in useful employment, going out in nature, and serving others will help you rise above pain. Staying active physically also reduces stress on the body, increases energy levels, and releases endorphins. Endorphins trigger a positive feeling in the body. Exercising reduces anxiety, depression, and negative moods. (1)

Be Steadfast

You may be asking yourself, “What if the same problems continue to arise? I’m too burnt out to keep standing strong.” There are certain things in our lives beyond our control, and how we meet the conflict determines our personal development. We may not be able

to change our circumstances, but we can change our attitude and approach.

I am reminded of a time when I was falsely accused of my motive. That was beyond my control. As hard as it was, I chose to respond calmly and continue my responsibilities. It is so tempting to look for an immediate exit during conflict, but being steadfastness produces fortitude. The uncertainty and unpredictability of the situation caused me pain and stress, but I pressed on faithfully. Prayer and connection to God was my greatest source of strength that carried me through. In the end, the false accusations cleared, and I was able to bridge a connection and make a positive difference in the other person’s life.

Cultivate Cheerfulness

It is a fact that we won’t always feel lighthearted, but the best antidote is to look on the bright side of life, smile, and talk about positive things. Brooding over our sorrows comes easily, but it will not change the circumstances. Instead, brooding decreases our health and happiness. There are certain emotions that we can’t help but feel, but we can certainly train our minds to look upwards.

Eat Clean & Balanced

Eat clean, nutritionally balanced, and whole foods as much as possible. Ensuring proper nutrition helps your body’s energy levels, and supports overall improved emotional and mental health. Diets with high amounts of fat and sugar are linked to mood disorders. You can learn a bit on how to switch

to a plant-based diet to highly improve your health and prevent disease, and even more in detail here.

Surround Yourself with Supportive People

We were not meant to bear life’s burdens alone. I can recall several periods in my life where I was experiencing pain, and I knew that God had sent a loving friend my way at that very moment. It was not a coincidence. Hearing another person’s perspective can help you view things in a better light and remind you that you’re not alone.

Have Happiness Now

In an earlier statement, you can have happiness along the way of life. Ask yourself, where do you look to for happiness when things go awry? Maybe you are experiencing financial hardships, family and home troubles, betrayal, supposed failure, or other painful circumstances. Life will not always run smoothly, but we can choose hopefulness and joy now, at this very moment. It is a fact that many are sad during the holidays.

True happiness is joy and hope under painful circumstances.

In what ways can you choose happiness in your current situation? How can you help others who are experiencing difficult times?

(1) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470658/>

(2) LS 292

(Submitted by Betty Dean. Written by Grace Jauwena, Health Coach. Used by permission from www.lifeandhealth.org Courtesy of LifeSpring – Resources for Hope and Healing Stuart, VA)

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Crossing the Lines

News snippets from outside the town/county lines...

Board hears audit report, approves electronic participation policy



Henry County's Chief Financial Officer Darrell Jones reviews a draft of Henry County's fiscal year 2024 audit, conducted by Creedle, Jones & Associates, P.C.

The Henry County Board of Supervisors at its December 17 meeting approved a document allowing board members to participate in board meetings by remote electronic or telephone access.

This policy will be part of the by-laws the board adopts at its organizational meeting.

Before the meeting, the board had no policy regarding electronic participation in meetings, County Attorney George Lyle said.

"So, by default members of this body can dial in, and monitor the meeting, and speak remotely from other locations, but they cannot make motions or vote," he said.

The policy adopted by the board provides two categories in which board members can tell the chairman they cannot attend the meeting in person: due to a personal reason or a temporary/permanent disability, Lyle said.

Those members referring to the personal reason can attend electronically "up to three meetings, or 25 percent, because this board has 12 regular meetings a year. You can do that three times a year - that could

be vacation, that could be anything," he said.

However, in the temporary/permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents a member's physical attendance category, Lyle said from his reading of the Code of Virginia members are not limited by the three meeting limit.

"Those could be more if a person's disability or reason for not being able to be here goes longer," Lyle said.

At the start of a meeting, Lyle said a board member that participates electronically will give the reason they are not physically attending the meeting, and their location. The board would then have the option of voting to allow that board member to participate remotely.

"The only reason the board would vote not to allow to remotely participate is because they can't be heard or clearly or seen to participate," he said.

Lyle noted a quorum, or the majority of four of the six board members, must physically attend the meeting to consider another member's request to participate electronically.



Mr. and Mrs. Claus (Gale Buck and his wife Christy) stopped by Piedmont Arts in Martinsville to help local students decorate the Christmas tree. (Contributed)

Pearson calls on council to prioritize residents over drama in farewell speech

At the end of her last meeting as a member of Martinsville City Council Tammy Pearson offered further insight into her decision not to seek reelection, and offered an impassioned plea to other council members.

"I thought a lot about what I should say. Should I go out blazing, right all the wrongs and spill the beans and all that kind of stuff," she said, adding that she decided "that's probably not quite the right thing."

Rather, "I thought I should kind of rise above that and maintain a certain level of decorum and decency and I think I've tried to go with that my whole time on council. I first want to share my thanks. I know a lot of people do this but first of all, I'm really bad at saying 'thank you.' It's not something that comes easy to me ... I apologize that I haven't done it more in my four years."

Pearson also thanked God, her husband, Will Pearson, her children, and others. She said her husband has "stood by me no matter what," even "when I came home screaming and crying and throw-



Tammy Pearson is pictured at her final meeting as a member of Martinsville City Council.

ing things and all that." She added that "he was unnecessarily dragged into" certain issues, and "risked his businesses when I had to take a stand. He took great care of not only me, but also our children. I also want to thank my children."

"Before I ran for office, Will and I sat down with the kids to make sure they were okay with it. They gave me love and encouragement and support I can't repay. We definitely lost some time together, but we knew that would happen, and they gave that to me so I could focus on the city."

our employees but by some council members" as well, Pearson said.

"To my fellow City Council members, I want us to stop focusing on personal gains and remember you took an oath to do what is best and what is right for our city," Pearson said. "It's up to all of us to hold each and every one of the people on this council accountable with what they do with their words and actions."

She ended simply, with "I love all of you and I just want to thank you."

Sewer project, traffic changes get nod from council

Martinsville City Council adopted a resolution and approved a bond package for sewer improvements, approved new traffic calming plans, heard comments from several residents and concerns from outgoing member Tammy Pearson (related story), and Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls.

The council also approved a resolution after holding a public hearing on revenue bonds for the Doe Run Sewer Project.

In 2021, an inspection of the Doe Run, Smith Lake Road, and Industrial Park sewer interceptors was completed, and a preliminary engineering report was prepared based on the condition assessment that identified the project needs. An application was submitted in 2022 to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) requesting project funding.

The DEQ identified Martinsville's project as a priority project for funding through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF). Construction plans have since been completed, the project is ready to go out to bid, and the City recently received drafts of the funding and financing agreements.

In September the council approved entering into VCWRLF loan and appropriated \$559,610 from the Water/Sewer Fund Balance for




Vice Mayor Aaron Rawls discussed some issues at the Dec. 17 meeting of Martinsville City Council.


the Doe Run, Smith Lake Road, and Industrial Park Sewer Improvements. Bids were opened November 4, with the low bid coming in about \$2 million more than the engineer's estimate, and with other "soft costs" such as survey, acquisition, etc., added, the budget shortfall increased to \$2,732,000.

The city contacted the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund and has secured additional loan proceeds to resolve the shortfall, according to Greg Maggard, director of Public Works.


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Roger Leon Foddrell

homemaker where she helped her husband raise dairy cattle, beef cattle, and hogs before later retiring from American Furniture in Martinsville. Mrs. Martin also had a passion for gardening where she raised a vegetable garden as well as flowers including her well known Red Presidential Canna Lilies that she raised for over 50 years.

The funeral will be held on Wednesday, December 18th at 3:00 pm at Norris Funeral Services - Stuart Chapel. Reverend

Ronnie Brown will be officiating. The family will receive friends and family one hour prior to the service. The burial will follow at Patrick Memorial Gardens with Reverend Ronnie Brown officiating.

Memorials can be made to the Patrick County Alzheimer Association, P.O. Box 1301, Stuart, VA 24171. Norris Funeral Services in Stuart is serving the Martin family. Online condolences may be made to www.norrisfuneral.com.

ily of God, Mr. Foddrell strived to be a beacon a of light in a world that needs the reminder of Jesus's love. Mr. Foddrell truly loved the Lord.

Left to cherish the memories of Mr. Foddrell are his wife, Loretta Bryant Foddrell of the home; one daughter, Rhonda F. Traylor (James) of Huber Heights, Ohio; five grandchildren, Victoria Weather-spoon, Deaun Reddick (Randeep), Dan-

A homegoing service for Mr. Foddrell will be held on Saturday, December 21, 2024, at 11:00 am at Moody Funeral Home in Stuart with Pastor Tim Oaks officiating. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to his church, Christianview Christian Church, 543 Anglin Mill Road Stoneville, NC. Online condolences may be made by visiting www.moodyfuneralservices.com.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA) IN THE FAMILY COURT OF THE
COUNTY OF RICHLAND) FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
)
LEE T. CONNELLY,)
PLAINTIFF,) **SUMMONS AND NOTICE**
vs.)
MARK E. HANCOCK) DOCKET NO.:
DEFENDANT.) No. 2024-DR-40-1768

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANT MARK E. HANCOCK:
YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED AND REQUIRED to answer the Complaint in this action, and to serve a copy of your Answer in the Plaintiff's Attorney at his office, 1720 Main Street, Suite 301, Columbia, SC 29201, within thirty (30) days after service of this Summons upon you, exclusive of the day of such service; and if you fail to answer the Complaint within the time aforesaid, the Plaintiff in this action will apply to the Court for the relief sought in said Complaint.

YOU WILL PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the original Complaint was filed in the Office of the Clerk of Court for Richland County, South Carolina, on June 13, 2024.

ATTORNEY: Larry C. Marchant Jr., Attorney for Plaintiff
Columbia, South Carolina



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those reported, the top five industries (59 percent) were Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (2,474); Administrative and Support and Waste Management (1,963); Health Care and Social Assistance (1,393); Manufacturing (1,360); and Retail Trade (1,206).

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number 531775 for additional information and to apply. For further information contact Terri Alt, Unit Coordinator, at 276-694-3341 or email talt@vt.edu. Review date 1/3/25. EO/AA Employer



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Meeting and event information is due no later than 5 p.m. Friday of the week before publication is requested. Items are included as space allows. Email to dhall@theenterprise.net.

Meetings

Monday, Jan. 6
The Patrick County Board of Supervisors will hold its reorganizational meeting at 6 p.m. in the third-floor courtroom of the Patrick County Administration Building.

Thursday, Jan. 9
The Patrick County School Board will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the School Board Office.

Wednesday, Jan.15
The Stuart Town Council will meet at 7 p.m. in the town office.

Events

Thursday, Jan. 2
The Parks and Recreation Department is beginning to offer free Tai Chi Flow classes for seniors, a gentle, low impact exercise to help improve balance, coordination and mobility. Classes meet on Thursdays from 3-4 p.m. in the Hooker Building at Rotary Field in Stuart, and will continue through February 27. For additional information, call (276) 694-3917.

Saturday, Jan. 4
Jeb Stuart Volunteer Rescue Squad will have a community breakfast from 7:30-10 a.m. at its building. Plates are \$8 and dine in, carry out, and curb service options are available. Orders can be placed by calling (276) 694-6171.

Ongoing

The Patrick County Patriots Turkey Shoot will be held Saturdays in January, and Saturday, February 1 and 8 at the Smith River Wildlife Club. Practice rounds start at 12:30 p.m. Shoot starts at 1 p.m. Rules are factory chokes only, no sleeves or re-chokes, and no modified gun barrels. Food will be available for purchase.

The Coffee Break Café hosts live music on Tuesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. Bring an instrument, or just come and listen.

The Patrick County Alzheimer’s Group LLC meets at 7 p.m. on the first Monday of every month at the Alzheimer’s office at 109 Buena Vista Ave in Stuart. New members or volunteers are welcome. For more information, call (276) 693-6018.

The Patrick County Quilters’ Sit-N-Sew is held on Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Quilted Colors. For more information, call 276-694-3020 or email patrickcountyquilters@gmail.com.

The Ararat Ruritan Club holds Rook games every Monday night from 6:30-8 p.m.

The Patrick County Veterans Memorial Honor Guard meets the first Tuesday of every month at the American Legion Post 105 at 7 p.m. Interested veterans are welcome to attend.

Free Community Meal, every 4th Wednesday, 5 p.m., Raven Rock Wesleyan Church, 1912 Raven Rock Road, Ararat. Take out or dine in. Call Scott or Nann Phillips at (276) 773-6004 or email pastor@ravenrockchurch.org.

Messianic Bible Study, Fridays from 6-7:30

Youngkin “deeply concerned” about drone activity, lack of information

After multiple sightings of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, were reported in and around Virginia, Gov. Glenn Youngkin wrote in an update, “I remain deeply concerned that Virginia has consistently sought information from federal partners, and to date, the information shared with the Commonwealth has been insufficient.”

Youngkin emphasized the importance of Virginia’s role in national security, noting the presence of critical infrastructure across the state. “The Commonwealth of Virginia is home to a significant number of national security and critical infrastructure sites upon which our nation depends each and every day,” Youngkin said. “The Virginia State Po-

lice Homeland Security Division and Virginia Department of Emergency Management continue to closely coordinate through our Fusion Center with the greater law enforcement and first responder community regarding drone activity in the Commonwealth. We will continue to engage with numerous federal partners and release further information as it becomes known and available.”

Authorities are urging the public to report drone sightings to the Virginia Fusion Center at vfc.vsp.virginia.gov or by calling (877) 4VA-TIPS. Officials also warned against attempting to interfere with or capture UAVs using personal drones or other means.

p.m. at The Honey Pot, 106 N. Main St., Stuart (across from The Coffee Break). Call (276) 694-2356 for more information.

The Carroll County Genealogy Club is open 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The Willis Gap Community Center: Members Meeting, the first Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m.; Appalachian Acoustic Open Jam, every Friday. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food. The music and dancing are 6:30-9 p.m.; Golden Oldies Open Jam is on the last Tuesday of the month. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food, music and dancing from 6:30-9 p.m.

Connect Health+ Wellness offers free confidential Medicaid/FAMIS application and renewal assistance for Virginia residents from birth to 64. No sign-up fees, no premiums, no deductibles. Medicaid renewals have resumed. Medicaid members need to keep their mailing address and contact information up to date. Connect Health + Wellness’ specially trained Medicaid/FAMIS Outreach Advocate can provide more information. Call or text Ann Walker, (276) 732-0509, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
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‘Teal Night’ honors Worley’s
recovery after crash

The Lady Cougars hosted “Teal Night” at their home game against Bassett on Dec. 16. During a break in play, Lauren Worley received a standing ovation, marking one year since her recovery began after being critically injured in a car crash caused by a drunk driver. Lauren is standing near the top of the stands.

Hike Gravely Nature Preserve

Join the Dan River Basin Association for an approximately 2.5 mile at the Gravely Nature Preserve in Ridgeway. DRBA’s First Saturday Outing (FSO) on January 4 at 10 a.m. This hike consists of easy trails along the ridge and a more strenuous loop trail leading down to and along the Smith River then back up.

Outings and meetings of the Dan River Basin Association are open to the public without charge.

Situated a few miles south of Martinsville, the 75-acre Gravely Nature Preserve presents outdoor lovers with a rich history, bountiful wildlife, and outstanding views of the Smith River. Old tobacco barns and the Burgess family cemetery along the ridge on the Jones Cliff Trail bear witness to its 19th century history as a tobacco plantation. Now nature has reclaimed the plantation and a more recent owner, Richard P. Gravely, an industrialist and amateur archaeologist, provided for its preservation as a “wildlife habitat and nature conservancy”.

The preserve, owned by Henry County and managed by Henry

County Parks and Recreation and DRBA volunteers, features an outdoor education center, approximately 2.5 miles of trails with interpretive signage, and a port-a-toilet. Mature hardwoods and

any time of year,” said FSO coordinator, Ellen Jessee.

Participants should dress in layers, wear hiking shoes or boots, and bring hiking stick(s), lunch, and water. All participants will be required to sign a waiver.

For more information, contact the outings coordinator Ellen Jessee, 276-734-1317, ejessee105@gmail.com

NOTE: If for any reason the event needs to be canceled, visit www.danriver.org by Friday, the day before the outing to determine whether the outing will be held.

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A festive guide to caroling

Christmas caroling is a joyful tradition that has endured for centuries. Christmas caroling can be traced to the fourth century in Rome. Latin hymns were written to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Historians believe that even before the emergence of Christianity midwinter songs existed to lift people’s spirits through the bleak weather and extended hours of darkness.

Christmas caroling continues to unite communities and spread holiday cheer through song. It is time to inspire a caroling resurgence by planning to gather friends, family, or neighbors for a caroling session. This guide can help anyone plan a memorable caroling event.

Gather your group

Begin by assembling a group of singers. No one needs to be an expert singer, as enthusiasm goes a long way. Reach out to friends, family, coworkers, and/or local community members. Try to get a diverse group of people together whose main goal is to have fun.

Find the right time and date

Typically evening hours after work or during weekends are when you can reach the greatest number of people. The goal is to enable participants to relax and enjoy the experience.

Map out a caroling route

Carefully identify neighborhoods or locations that are known for being festive. While the organizer may choose to carol around his or her own neighborhood, it may be possible to engage more of the community in other settings. Look at local nursing homes or even community centers as caroling locations. Contact businesses along Main Street to see if caroling in the center of town to coincide with holiday shopping may be a good idea.



Christmas music often sets the holiday scene, and carolers can bring familiar songs into neighborhoods this time of year.

Compile a list of classics

Most people will want to hear the carols and other songs they know and love. Make a list of classic Christmas songs that aren’t overly complicated and singers will already know how to sing, such as ‘Jingle Bells,’ ‘Deck the Halls,’ ‘Frosty the Snowman,’ and ‘Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.’ If a particularly accomplished singer is in the group, he or she might do a featured solo. Be sure to have printed copies of the lyrics and sheet music for all participants.

Enlist some musicians

Although caroling is traditionally performed a cappella, having someone who plays an instrument, like a guitar or violin, can ensure everyone is on the right note and can keep the pace of each song.

Plan to rest

Singing can be joyful, but also tiring. Bring along refreshments so the carolers can rest their voices and stop to grab a drink or snack. Tea, coffee and cocoa can warm up participants on chilly days. Perhaps make one of the caroling stops in front of a local coffee shop and pop in after a set.

Coordinate attire

Although everyone does not have to dress alike, a similar element, such as a red scarf or green mittens, can unite the group.

Add a charitable element

Consider incorporating a charitable aspect to the caroling. Collect financial or food donations for a local food pantry, or do a toy drive while caroling, encouraging people to offer a wrapped gift in exchange for some beautiful music.

Notable Christmas celebrations around the world

It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas all over the world. Christmas celebrations include various time-honored traditions that celebrants hold near and dear to their hearts.

Depending on where someone lives, their Christmas traditions may look quite different from those in other parts of the globe. It can be enjoyable to learn how Christmas is celebrated elsewhere and perhaps even incorporate a few new traditions into your celebrations.

Take a peek at these customs near and far.

Seafood and beachside celebrations: Australia is located in the southern hemisphere, which means Aussies are enjoying the peak of their summer come December 25. A white Christmas is unlikely, unless the ‘white’ refers to white, sandy beaches. Santa is probably swapping his thick coat for a pair of board shorts, and heavy, roast-laden meals are unlikely to make it on to the menu. Instead, Australians dine on seafood feasts and spend Christmas outdoors camping or at the beach.

Krampus parade: Some Christmas elves are not so jolly. Just ask residents of the Austrian, German and Hungarian Alps. Each year in this region, a true ‘Bad Santa’ is the talk of town. Villagers believed that Krampus, a half-man, half-goat creature with a legion of ill-tempered elves, roamed the mountains wreaking havoc. Krampus was said to abduct miscreants and set unruly youth or even intoxicated adults straight. Today, Krampus is more the ‘bad cop’ to Santa’s ‘good cop’ persona. Krampus is celebrated as an antihero at parades and other events.



Holiday traditions differ considerably in various regions of the world. Celebrants may want to consider incorporating foreign traditions into their own Christmas celebrations this year.

Las Posadas: According to scripture, Joseph and Mary had to make an arduous journey from their hometown to Bethlehem for census purposes while Mary was pregnant. When the couple arrived, they found lodgings were nonexistent, and Mary ended up giving birth to Jesus in a manger surrounded by animals. In celebration of that journey, people in Mexico and Guatemala celebrate Las Posadas, a procession representing Mary and Joseph’s journey and their struggle to find lodging.

La Befana: In Italian folklore, La Befana is a witch-like old woman who, like Santa, delivers gifts to children throughout Italy. Instead of this gift-giving taking place on Christmas, La Befana hands out gifts on the Epiphany Eve in a simi-

lar way to how the Three Magi brought presents to Baby Jesus. Le Befana also is believed to fly through the night sky to sweep away all the troubles of the old year and clear the way for a fresh start.

Move over reindeer: Although reindeer often garner fanfare this time of year, the Yule goat is a Christmas symbol and tradition in Scandinavia and northern Europe. Each year in towns throughout Sweden and other areas, large statues of Yule goats are built on the first day of Advent and stand throughout the holiday season. This tradition dates back to ancient Pagan festivals, and some believe the goat is connected to the Norse god Thor, who rode in the sky in a chariot pulled by two goats.

Warm & Wonderful
Winter
Wishes

May the sights, sounds and traditions of this special season fill your heart and home with delight.

Happy Holidays!

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Creative Writing Contest

Each year, youngsters participate in our annual Creative Writing Contest. The hardest part for us is selecting the winners, three in each of the categories represented. All of the entries we received this year, as every year, are well written and creative. Our Honorable Mention entries are below and on the pages that follow. We hope you enjoy them as much as we did!

Pre-K - 3rd Grade

Patrick Springs Primary School

By Brantley Setliff
If the Grinch came to my door, I would get my mom to make him go away nicely because I think he is scary!

By Olivia Gregory
If I could ask Santa Claus one question, I'd want to ask what he does. He said he has magic and his reindeer can fly.

By Luna Hatfield
If I built a gingerbread house, I would add a candy cane, icing, gumdrops and a sucker. The icing would hold the walls up and make the roof stable. The candy cane would be on the side of the door. The gum drops would be on the roof. After that, I would eat it!

By Maddy Cassell
If a gingerbread man jumped out of my oven, I would jump out of the window!

By Micah Harris
My favorite Christmas cookies are chocolate cookies, gingerbread cookies and sugar cookies. I like them because they are sweet.

By Jonathan Padgett
My Christmas wish list is a truck, a cup and an elf. I'd like these toys because the truck reminds me of my dad named Shane. The cup reminds me of my mom. The elf reminds me of Santa Claus.

By Chloe Howell
If I got to help in Santa's workshop, I would like to make presents. I think it would be fun to wrap presents. I am good at wrapping.

By Maddox Trent
One time I made a feast for my classroom. I served gingerbread man's alligator chicken. Then, I served pig and all of it tasted good.

Frankie the Snowman
There was a girl snowman named Frankie. She could not talk. This made her very sad. One day, a little girl found Frankie the snowman on a cold windy day. When she found Frankie, she put a new nose on the snowman. Next, the little girl's Granny came. Granny used sticks to give Frankie new arms and legs.
The little girl gave Frankie a hug. Suddenly, the snowman found her voice. Frankie was so happy she could talk and sing. She said, "I love all the people! Merry Christmas!"
By Arianna Whitt,
Kindergarten

Santa and the Forgotten House
While the Elf and Santa were flying away from the last kid's house. They realized that they missed a house. When they got back to the North Pole, they were shocked. Santa said, "Oh, no! We missed a house! What are we going to do!?" The elf replied, "It's fine. We will just go back."
Santa and the Elf agreed and decided they had to go back to the kid's house for sure. The kids had to have presents. The Elf realized it was sunrise. The Elf shouted, "Oh, no! What are we going to do now that it's almost day light?" Santa said, "Don't worry! I carry the disguises and the parachute at the back of the sleigh." So, they hurriedly changed clothes and jumped out of the sleigh.
Santa was dressed as a mailman and the Elf was dressed as a kid. Since it is sunrise, if they don't get to the kid's house by 8:00 AM they will be in trouble. Oh, and also, I don't know why but Santa has a motorcycle in his sleigh as well. The

By Emmy Brumbaugh
My ugly Christmas sweater will have glitter and some red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, red, violet, pink and rose. It will have fire powers and some water powers. It will have Earth powers and light powers. It is my superpowers, Christmas sweater!

By Ruthann Hudson
My favorite Christmas song is "Last Christmas." I like the sounds and I like how the people sound. I feel happy when it's Christmas. My mom will turn on the music when we put up the tree and decorate the tree, it is fun.

By Kalliope Hall
My favorite Christmas ornament is an ornament from my grandma. It has a snowman face with black eyes, a white body, an orange nose and a black dotted mouth. It is on my Christmas tree. I put it there every year.

By Easton Burris
If Rudolph could talk, he would say "I am watching and Santa is watching too, so be good".

By Cadence White
When I look at a Christmas tree, I feel good. They look pretty. I love decorating the Christmas tree. After I'm done, it looks good and I like it. My details of the tree are nice. I love it.

By Mason Putnam
Wow! A magic sack! It says "To Josh". It has a toy plane, a toy knife and an American flag inside. I gave the sack to Josh, who is my brother. My brother was happy.

By McKinley Lowe
My favorite Christmas movie is "Home

Alone". I like it because one kid is home alone and is happy. He gets to do whatever he wants, like eat sweets, watch TV all night and stay up late.

By Camden Burks
My favorite Christmas ornament is a Grinch ornament because I like the movie. It is great and funny. The Grinch is green and mean and at the end, he is nice.

By Lydia Mathis
When I look at a Christmas tree, I think pretty. The tree is white. The lights are red. The ornaments are pretty.

By Riley Maxey
I have two surprise gifts to give. I'm going to give one to Olivia and the other one to Chloe. I put a new water bottle in the first one. The second one has a new pair of shoes.

By Korben Spangler
I'm in charge of decorating the Christmas tree this year. It has a star on top and fake snowflakes. The lights are red and blue. It has orange balls with fake snow in them. It also has a circle rug to make the tree look like it's on carpet.

By Phoenix Ratliff
My favorite things about Christmas are:
1. getting presents
2. putting up the decorations
3. God's birthday

If I was hired to watch Santa's reindeer, I would first grab a wrench. Then put super boosters on the back of Santa's sled. Then, I would train the reindeer. Then, I would give the reindeer a carrot.
By Scotty Helbert
Second Grade

Meadows of Dan Elementary School

Elf and Santa drove the motorcycle to the kids house with a bag full of presents. When they got to the kid's house, the time was 7:48 AM. They needed to work fast. Santa guarded the house while in mailman clothes and the Elf changed into his Elf clothes. The Elf snuck into the house and climbed onto the shelf so that he could watch out for the boy while Santa brought in the presents.
Santa got all the presents into the house and placed them under the beautiful Christmas tree. Santa used his magic to teleport the Elf and himself back to sleigh where they drove off to the North Pole. They arrived at the North Pole. The Elf was so relieved, but Santa wasn't because he remembered something. Santa yelled, "THE BOY HAD A SISTER!!!!!!!"
By Tanner Whitt
3rd Grade


The Christmas the Grinch was Good!
Once upon a time on Christmas Eve, there was snow on the ground! The Grinch was waking up on this cold morning and rolled over to say morning to Max. Max was the Grinch's dog. Max had an idea and started wagging his tail. The Grinch said "tell me Max." Max was thinking that not everyone gets Christmas presents because their parents could not afford them.
Max the dog thinks that the Grinch should buy the kids presents. The Grinch says "no way Max." Then Max reminds the Grinch how it use to feel not to get anything. The Grinch started to think!
As the day went on, he couldn't help but think

about those kids. Then he says "Max you were right, we should buy the kids some presents." Max told the Grinch "let's get going , we only have a little time." They went and got alot of presents! They knocked on everyone's door in town to make sure that everyone had a present under the tree!
But remember, it's not about what's under the tree, it's about the birth of Jesus and spending time with family! Merry Christmas!
By Jackson Boyd
Third grade

Christmas Cookies
Down the hallway I go
To make cookies with dough.
Sugar, eggs, flour, and butter
I can't wait to pick my favorite cutter.
So sugary and sweet
These cookies can't be beat.
Add some sprinkles on top
I can't wait for Santa to stop.
By Meredith Pilson
Grade 1

Rudolph Goes to School
Rudolph was so excited about his first day of school. He did math, technology, and wrote sentences. He made one hundred friends. His best friend is Comet. Rudolph ate lots of apples for lunch because he loves apples so much. At the end of the day, Santa came to school with the sleigh to take Rudolph back to the North Pole.
By Liam Whitt
1st grade

Happy Holidays



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Merry Christmas!



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6th - 7th Grade

Woolwine Elementary School

Christmas Eve

Twas the night before Christmas and Abby was so excited that she couldn't sleep. She knew morning would come a lot faster if she slept, but she couldn't stop thinking about how much fun tomorrow would be. She was also pretty sure that if she stayed awake, she would hear Santa and his reindeer!

Abby lay very still in her bed. Suddenly, she heard a noise. It was a light tapping sound that seemed to be coming from the roof. There it was again! Abby listened carefully. It sounded like something was walking on the roof. Abby knew that it must be the reindeer and Santa! She didn't hear it again. She fell asleep.

She woke up the next morning and went downstairs. She saw the gifts from Santa, but before she opened them, she checked the cookies that she had left for Santa. They were all gone! She knew what she heard last night was Santa and his reindeer.

By Bailey Vance
Grade 6

The Kid Who Had A Dream

It was Christmas Eve and I was determined to catch Santa, so I put cameras and traps all over the house. I raided the candy jar and got a handful of candy and got some surgery drinks to help me stay up all night to catch Santa. I waited and waited, but he never came. I was about to give up, but then I heard something so I turned around really quickly. I looked at the fireplace and all around the house, but I could not find Santa. I walked to the Christmas tree and I found tons of presents under the tree. When I looked on the cameras, Santa was there! I went to bed and Christmas morning I found out that it was all a dream. There were no cameras or traps, but there definitely was a Santa who had visited my house!

By Ethan Lee Worley
Grade 6

The Truth About Christmas

What is Christmas, so many will say
They don't understand why we celebrate this day.
Many think it's all about Santa and lights so bright
But there is so much more about that special night.
In a little manger, long, long ago
A baby was born that made our hearts glow.
He came as our Savior to this earth
Bringing love and hope with his birth.
The stars above shone bright and clear
To help guide the wise men near.
They brought him gifts and angels sang praise
And shouted peace for all our days.
This Christmas, remember it's God's son
It's the gift of Jesus and the

miracles he has done.
By Natalie Worley
Grade 6

A Poor Mom on Christmas Day

There once was a mom who loved her daughter with all her heart. They were always there for each other even though they didn't have much. It was getting close to Christmas and all the little girl would talk about was the presents she hoped she would get. Mom couldn't stop thinking about what her daughter's face would look like if she didn't have a present. The little girl told everyone that her mom was going to get her something very special this year.

One day the little girl and her mom went to the grocery store. They were in the checkout line and the cashier told them your cost is \$15.85. Mom searched through her purse and realized that she did not have enough to pay for the groceries. She looked around for a miracle to happen. A nice lady behind them knew what it was like because she had been through the same thing. She paid for their groceries and they talked for a few minutes. It turns out that the lady lived in the same apartment and told them that if they needed anything to call her.

It was finally Christmas morning and the mother was frantically thinking of how she was going to tell her excited daughter that she could not afford to give her a Christmas present this year. The little girl woke up and started looking for her presents. Her mother got out of bed to tell her daughter who was still looking. She got to the room as her daughter opened the front door to see if her present was outside of the door. There was a present placed right outside. She knew that a miracle had happened! However, they both knew that Christmas was all about having each other.

By Paisley Wood
Grade 6

On Christmas Day

Hooray! It is Christmas Day
I can not wait to be on the way.
Nana and Popie's house is close
Filled with family that I love most.
Nana will serve dishes of food
Then we will all be in a good mood.
After dinner come the card games
Where Popie normally puts us to shame.
By Alycia Wilson
6th grade

The Christmas Miracle

Today is Christmas Eve, but it does not feel like Christmas Eve. It feels lonely. I am the only one home, no tree is set up, and most importantly, there is no snow. When my dad comes home we go out to buy a Christmas tree, but when we get there the man at the counter says they are all sold out. So we go back home and I go to my room where I hear a little voice. I don't think much about

it until I hear it again. So I went downstairs to check it out. When I get to the bottom of the stairs, I see a decorated tree with lots of presents under it, and most importantly, it is snowing! This really is a Christmas miracle.

By Christian Rakes
Grade 6

The Two Elf Friends

On December 22, 2023 at 2:00 PM, it was a cold winter's day in Alaska. It was snowing very hard and 15 inches of snow had already fallen that evening. When all 25 elves looked out the window of Santa's Little Helpers Toy Factory, they were surprised.

There were two elf friends named Beans and Candy Cane. They were a great team in the factory, and they made lots of toys together. However, Beans was jealous of Candy Cane in some ways. Candy Cane made much better toys than Beans and Candy Cane seemed much smarter also. Everybody paid much more attention to Candy Cane, Toy making didn't come easy to Beans like it did to Candy Cane. That made Beans sad. Beans didn't know what to say about it to Candy Cane, because Beans was afraid it would come out in a mean way. Beans knew he had to talk to Candy Cane, and Christmas was right around the corner. So at 3:00 P.M. December 23, 2023, Beans finally talked to Candy Cane, and it did not come out in a mean way! Beans said, "Since I'm not as good as you, can you please teach me how to be a better toy maker?" Candy Cane was honored that Beans was asking for help, and he looked forward to teaching his friend.

They worked everyday together from then on. By the next Christmas, Beans and Candy Cane were the best toy makers in all of Alaska. The lesson of this story is that one conversation made all the difference.

By Scarlett Greer
Grade 6

The Night Rudolph's Nose Didn't Light

It was Christmas Eve. Santa got ready and the elves packed his sleigh and bag. It was time for take off. They were on their way to drop off the presents at the children's houses, but all a sudden, a boom and Rudolph's nose would not light. It was hard to see, but they made it through the darkness. After the first 2,000 houses, they saw light. They flew to the light that was red. They got very close, and all a sudden, Boom! A lot of dust appeared. Rudolph was gone. Santa saw him behind a tree. His nose was red! So they delivered all the presents before Christmas Day.

By Wyatt Rodgers
Grade 6

Rudolph Goes to the Dentist

One winter day Santa told Rudolph, "You need to go to the dentist." Rudolph took off running as fast as he could, but Vixen

and Prancer tackled him and the three of them landed face first in the snow. Vixen had a snow beard and Prancer laughed, "Vixen, now you're Santa!" Prancer turned around and added, "Rudolph, you are going to that dentist whether you like it or not." Rudolph sighed and then nodded.

When Rudolph walked into the dentist's office all he could smell was mint. He walked up to the receptionist and asked her when the dentist could see him. She told him that he needed to wait a few minutes. The dentist walked through the door and told Rudolph to come on back. Rudolph sat down in the chair and the dentist began to work.

After the dentist filled two cavities, Rudolph went home. When the numbness was gone, he decided that the dentist wasn't so bad after all.

By Dixie Scott
Grade 6

The Nice Ape

One winter day
It was cold and I saw a sleigh.
It was going to be fun, fun, fun!
But then I saw it would not run.
So I went to my house to get some tape
But on the way I saw an ape.
He was nice and wanted to be my friend.
He gave me a sleigh and I was happy again.
So I played and played until the end.

By Brayden Bowman
Grade 6

Not So Bad After All

It was December 24, 1986, a day before Christmas, but for some reason everyone was sad. The reason was that there was no snow! There was no sledding, no snowball fights, no making snow angels, and no making snowmen! "What will we do?" asked Matthew and Brandon, the two brothers who lived on Main Street.
After a while of thinking Matthew broke the silence. "Brandon! I know what to do." he said. Brandon replied, "What?" "We have to write a letter to Santa," Matthew said. So they got paper and a pencil and began writing. "Dear Santa, it is a day before Christmas and there is still no snow! Could you please make it snow before tomorrow, so everyone can have fun?" After Matthew finished writing, he put the note in an envelope and asked his mom to mail it.

After all of that, the family had to go shopping for their big Christmas feast that they always had. By the time they were back it was already time for the brothers to go to sleep.

When they woke up they looked out the window. There was snow everywhere! Santa had gotten their letter and their plan had worked! Maybe Christmas wouldn't be so bad afterall.

By Blake Miles
Grade 6



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For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a Son is given
-Isaiah 9:6

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6th - 7th Grade

Christmas

Christmas is a time
When jingle bells chime.
We decorate the Christmas tree
With all our friends and family.
Christmas is a wonderful sea-
son
To be cheerful for every reason.
All these things are really nice
But Christmas is the birth of
Jesus Christ.
By Kaeleigh Woodham
Grade 7

The Ready Reindeer

Dasher said, “Look how fast I
can fly.”
Dancer said, “Look at my dance
moves.”
Prancer said, “I’m ready to fly.”
Vixen said, “I hear Santa
Claus.”
Comet said, “I can hear the
bells.”
Cupid said, “I see the elves.”
Doner said, “I feel the joy.”
Blitzen said, “I’m ready to de-
liver toys.”
Rudolph said, “I’m excited to
see the good girls and boys.”
Santa gave a simple command
and they flew out of sight.
By Aubree Bowman
6th grade

The Sneaky Elf

One snowy day I woke up to eat
breakfast. I thought it was go-
ing to be a normal day, but when
I saw that the entire house was
messed up. I started to panic be-
cause I had family coming over.
When I calmed down, I realized
that I had an elf, so I ran to the
bookshelf where he was sup-
posed to be, but he wasn’t there.
I looked for a little while and final-
ly found him in my room on my
bed. I didn’t know how he could
have gotten there because I had
just been there. I had no time to
think about it so I started clean-
ing. It took me hours to clean up,
but finally I finished. After that I
was really tired but I didn’t want
to go to sleep so I stayed up. I was
waiting for my family to come
knock on the door when I heard
a loud BANG!!! I jumped and ran
to see what it was and, of course,
it was the elf. He knocked over a
vase so I had to clean up fast. I
swept it up, took it to the trash,
and threw it all away. I put him
in the basement with all of the
other old Christmas decorations.
Then, finally, I had peace.
By Blake Belcher
Grade 6

A Haunted Christmas

It was a cold Christmas morn-
ing. The windows were fogging
up, and I could hear the sound of
logs crackling in the fire. It was
so peaceful until my rowdy broth-
er woke up my family and me. I
decided to stay in bed until I was
forced to get up and open pres-
ents. I laid there shivering half
to death wondering what I was
going to get. After a long time go-
ing through the options for gifts I
wanted, it was time to unravel all
my presents.
As usual, I started with the
stocking. I got so much candy I
already knew my stomach wasn’t
going to like me. I sat by the fire

eating candy waiting for the oth-
ers to get everything out of their
stockings. It was finally my turn
to open the first present. It was
very small. I was confused because
I never wished for something the
size of a newborn ant. My parents
said they never bought this pres-
ent. I opened it up very cautiously
to find a crumpled up note inside
it. The note said, “I will be here
to haunt you every breath you
breathe. You will never find me or
know my identity.” I was scared
for my life! I never had once in
any single second of my life experi-
enced something like this. My
mom and dad drove to the police
station to report the note. My sib-
lings and I stayed at the house.
I decided to go down into the
basement thinking what is hap-
pening is just one big dream. I
pinched myself and I am not in a
dream. I sat down thinking about
what could happen to me in the
near future. While I was sitting
on the icy cold floor two hands
encased my neck. They wouldn’t
let go. I tried with all my might to
find a way to break free. I contin-
ued to struggle and I finally broke
free. I ran upstairs so fast that
not even a pronghorn could catch
me. I never was able to get a good
look at this mysterious person. As
soon as I got out of the basement
my parents walked through the
door. I ran towards them gasping
for air and told them everything
that had just happened.

My dad went into the basement
and found nothing down there.
They must have thought I was
going crazy until they spotted
scratch marks on my neck. This
went from the average Christmas
to the scariest one of my life. My
dad informed the police over the
phone and they said they would
send a couple of deputies. The
scratch marks on my neck start-
ed to burn like fire. As I was be-
ginning to treat my injuries the
police knocked on the door. They
instantly went into the basement
searching every corner.

They couldn’t find any leads
until one of the deputies noticed
a hidden door behind a couple of
gigantic boxes. They pulled open
the door and found a man in there.
His name was Erik the Destroy-
er. He was a high profile criminal
that the police had been search-
ing for. The deputies thanked me
for breaking down the clues as
they put cuffs on Erik.

I could finally enjoy the rest of
my Christmas. This was by far
the scariest Christmas I ever had
experienced and I hope I will nev-
er experience this again.

By Nathan Shuff
Grade 7

The Month Of December

Winter is cold, but the month is
warm like an open fireplace burn-
ing away with time as it and life
itself passes on.

As Jesus himself was born on
the day given the name Christ-
mas while angels above cry tears
of joy but as they fall their tears
turn into little flakes of snow cov-
ering everything in its path in a
white blanket making everything
colorless in life but not in mind.

Christmas is a time for families
to gather around the Christmas
tree for singing and praying.

Children especially love it be-
cause it opens their eyes to spe-
cial things in life that only they
can see or feel.

Christmas is special to every-
one just in different ways.

By Lily Johnson
Grade 7

Christmas With Fudge

Christmas time with Fudge the
cat
She’s my friend and she’s not
fat.
She sits with me when I play
my games
She’s always quiet and never
complains.
Christmas is her favorite time
of year
Catnip in her stocking brings
her lots of cheer.
Lots of sleep is in our plan
Waking up so we can
Eat lots of food and treats.
Christmas with Fudge can’t be
beat!
By Holden Perez
Grade 7

Reindeer Are Missing!

It was three days before Christ-
mas and everyone at
the North Pole was trying to get
everything ready for
the holiday. Elves were scurry-
ing about making sure
the toys were ready. One elf
named Holly went to check
on the reindeer and give them
candy canes, their favorite treat.
Holly handed them their treats.

After they ate their treats it
was time for Holly to clean their
stalls. Holly led them out of their
stalls to the big pen next door.
She started to latch the stall, but
suddenly another elf told her that
Santa was having an emergency
meeting. Holly hurried to lock the
stall but was not careful about it.
She then hurried to the meeting.
What she didn’t know was that
chaos was about to strike.

Donnor was the first one to no-
tice that the gate was open so he
gently nudged it open the rest of
the way and stepped out of the
pen. He smelled candy canes so
he followed the scent with the
other reindeer close behind.

By the time they reached the
candy canes they couldn’t even
see the stables anymore. They
were lost!

Back at the workshop no one
had realized that the reindeer
were missing because they had
another problem. The sleigh was
broken! The elves worked on the
sleigh until Christmas Eve.

An elf named Snowy went to the
stables to check on the reindeer.
They were missing! Snowy looked
everywhere but could not find
them. He finally went to Santa
and told him what had happened.
Santa asked Snowy to bring in
the elves. Snowy knew Santa had
a plan.

After Santa told the elves his
plan they got to work. About three
hours later they had made 7,000
candy canes! A few elves moved a
big fan in front of the candy
canes so the scent would trav-

el farther. The reindeer had been
walking for a while. Suddenly
they smelled candy canes! They
followed the scent all the way
back to the stables. The elves saw
them coming and they all cheered.
Christmas was saved!

By Lacie Bullins
Grade 7

Christmas in Space

The year is 2102. Our parents
have scheduled a Christmas trip
for us around the eight planets.
The spaceship is covered with all
kinds of Christmas decorations
Rumor has it that Santa has a
rocket of his own, so maybe, just
maybe, Santa and his reindeer
will visit us on this trip!

It’s a few days until Christmas
and we are boarding the space-
ship. They call it “Supernova 17”
because it can travel a lightyear in
one minute! I board the ship with
my parents and we are amazed.
The ship is very spacious and our
spacesuits are in front of us wait-
ing to be worn. We put them on
and buckle up preparing for take
off in the snowy landscape out-
side of the ship. As the astronauts
work their magic we hear a count-
down. “5...4...3...2...1...preparing
for space travel.” And WOOSH!
The Supernova takes off and my
parents and I are suddenly miles
high up in the sky! The stars look
wonderful, and Earth is arguably
more beautiful from space.

It’s Christmas Day! We’ve flown
past Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and
Uranus. Neptune is the last. We
hope Santa will be able to trav-
el all the way here, because if
not, my parents say I won’t get
any presents. As we get closer to
Neptune we look out the window
and see Santa! But he seems to be
aimlessly floating through space.
Is he in trouble? We hopelessly
stare until we have an idea. We
tell the astronauts to go back and
they do so. As we approach at a
slower than usual speed, I gear
up in my spacesuit and prepare to
save Santa.

I hop out of the ship and a teth-
er is the only thing keeping me
from drifting out to space. I ap-
proach Santa and his sleigh of
reindeer and ask what happened.
Santa explains that his rocket
ran out of fuel and all of his rein-
deer were tired, rendering them
unable to pull the sleigh. I pull
Santa’s sleigh towards our ship.
As I latch onto the ship using the
tether that was pulling me I tie it
to the sleigh. I head back inside
and relay the information to my
parents and we fly back home to
Earth.

Once we get to Earth and land,
we’ve officially saved Santa and
his reindeer! As a reward San-
ta gives us all of the cookies and
milk he’s gathered. Keep in mind,
this is A LOT. As we head home
in our flying car we are satisfied
with our Christmas. My parents
are planning on doing this next
year, albeit without saving Santa!

By Kaitlyn Gunter
Grade 7

















































































Classic holiday films the whole family can enjoy

Celebrants owe the joy of the holiday season to various components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year. Holiday films also do their part to make the season so special.

Many people have their own favorite holiday films, and the following are some that can engage viewers who are young or simply young at heart.

‘A Christmas Story’

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Ryder BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

‘Little Women’

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, the 1994 telling of this classic follows the March sisters, who confront finan-



Films are a popular component that help to make the holiday season so special.

cial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. While it’s not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

‘Klaus’

Perhaps not as well-known as other animated holiday flicks, ‘Klaus,’ released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to work in a frozen

town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children’s faces.

‘Meet Me In St. Louis’

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World’s Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all

is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of ‘Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas’ in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

‘The Santa Clause’

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad Scott (Tim Allen) accidentally kills a man in a Santa suit, he magically becomes the next Santa. He must learn to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

‘Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas’

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production is a television special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what’s needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.

Films are a popular component that help to make the holiday season so special.

How to keep guests entertained this holiday season

Gatherings with loved ones are a big part of what makes the holiday season such a special time of year.

As families grow and spread out across the map, they may not get too many chances to spend quality time with one another. But the holiday season is a time each year when families make a concerted effort to get together. As families get together under the same roof during the holiday season, individuals tasked with hosting gatherings tend to have a lot on their plates. Memories tend to be made around the holiday dinner table, but the season also presents ample opportunities to create nights to remember outside the house as well. Hosts can keep the following ideas in mind as they look for ways to entertain guests this holiday season.

Take a turn as a tour guide. Locals may not make the rounds of nearby tourist destinations too fre-



Hosts can lead a tour of their towns to entertain overnight guests during the holiday season.

quently, but the holiday season is a great opportunity for hosts to show guests what makes their towns so unique. Serve as a tour guide for guests on a sightseeing day with visits to local monuments or museums. Wrap the day up at a holiday bazaar where local small business owners have set up shop. This affords guests a chance to tour a new community or a hometown they haven’t visited in awhile, and also makes for a great chance for all to squeeze in a little last-minute holiday shopping.

Plan an ugly sweater bar crawl. If hosts and their guests are all of age, an ugly sweater bar crawl can make for a fun night out on the town. Encourage guests to wear an ugly holiday sweater and map out a route and schedule of visits to local bars and restaurants. Hosts must prioritize safety on these types of excursions, so arrange for a bus to take guests from one spot to the next if establishments are far away from one another. If Main Street has a local bar district, arrange for transportation downtown at the start of the crawl and home when the

night ends.

Take in some local entertainment. Whether it’s a holiday lighting display show or a local theater performance of a classic holiday tale like Charles Dickens’s ‘A Christmas Carol,’ a night of local live entertainment is a great way for hosts and their guests to get out of the house. Hosts can even book a reservation for a pre-show meal at a local restaurant so they can be free of cooking and give guests their undivided attention.

Host a holiday movie night. Weary travelers who want to stay in may appreciate a holiday movie double feature. Hosts can let guests pick a pair of holiday films and then host a double feature, complete with traditional movie fare like popcorn and candy. Hosts can even offer adult guests a glass of homemade eggnog during the films to up the holiday ante even further.

Holiday hosts can embrace various ways to entertain guests during a time of year when there’s no shortage of fun ways to spend a night.




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Christmas fanfare does not cease when the calendar turns from December 25 to 26. The Epiphany on January 6 also is an important day of celebration.

Celebrating the Epiphany

The holiday season is full of faith and celebration. Even though people may believe this important time begins at the start of December, for millions of the Christians, the Twelve Days of Christmas begin with the birth of Baby Jesus on December 25 and continue through the Epiphany on January 6.

The Epiphany, also known as Three Kings Day, is a Christian feast day that “celebrates the revelation of God in His Son as human in Jesus Christ,” says The National Shrine of Saint Jude. The Epiphany is celebrated on January 6 each year and gets its name from the Greek word meaning “to reveal, or manifestation,” a nod to the idea that this was the day Jesus was revealed to the world.

On the Epiphany, three Magi visited the Christ child to pay homage. These wise men were the first to greet Jesus after his parents. The Magi followed a star to Bethlehem, having faith that the Child’s location would be accurate. The unlikely royal visitors bestowed gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These herbs are typically used in burial ceremonies, and their offering may have potentially foreshadowed Jesus’ destiny.

According to Father Hezekias Carnazzo, a Melkite Catholic priest

and founding executive director of the Virginia-based Institute of Catholic Culture, the Feast of the Epiphany is one of the earliest feasts and actually predates the celebration of Christmas.

Although the Epiphany is an important date for Christians and many celebrate it, celebrants in Spain and Latin America consider it as important as Christmas Day. Within these nations Día de los Reyes (Three Kings Day) is a time for serving Rosca de Reyes, an oval-shaped treat that has a small doll inside to represent Baby Jesus. The figurine symbolizes the hiding of the infant Jesus from King Herod’s troops. Children also receive the majority of their gifts on Three Kings Day. It is customary for kids to place their old shoes with a wish list on them for the Three Kings. On the morning of January 6, the shoes are filled with toys and gifts.

The Epiphany is celebrated in various ways around the world. In the Czech Republic, people swim in the freezing cold Vltava River and men dress up as the Magi before riding camels through Prague’s city center. Three Kings Bread, similar to the Rosca de Reyes and called Dreikönigskuchen, is prepared and consumed in Germany and Switzerland.

Take the time to honor veterans this holiday season

The holiday season is a time when family and friends gather to reconnect and celebrate. For many families there are people missing from these celebrations, whether they sacrificed their lives defending the country or died honorably years after serving in the military.

As individuals plan to add spirit to homes and businesses through decorations and other touches, they also can consider adding a bit of the holidays to the places where their beloved service members lie in eternal rest. This is the main premise behind the Wreaths Across America organization.

The primary activity of Wreaths Across America is to distribute wreaths to be placed on graves in military cemeter-

ies. On National Wreaths Across America Day, which takes place on a moving day each December at thousands of locations, volunteers place wreaths on headstones and read out the names of the service members.

The organization was founded by Morrill Worcester and his wife, Karen, as a way to teach all generations about the value of their freedoms and the importance of honoring those who sacrificed so much to protect those freedoms. Worcester, owner of the Worcester Wreath Company in Maine, remembered a trip to Washington D.C. as a child that included a visit to Arlington National Cemetery. In 1992, when Worcester’s business had a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the

Games add another layer of levity to holiday celebrations



These are just a few festive ways to have fun with friends or family members during holiday gatherings.

The holidays bring together friends, neighbors and family members to celebrate some of the most festive days of the year. Although celebrants often incorporate traditions they hold dear this time of year, downtime provides an opportunity to embrace new games and entertainment ideas as well.

The following are some fun games to play this holiday season that can help to break the ice and keep everyone laughing.

Reindeer Games

Everyone knows that Rudolph wanted to have fun and participate in “reindeer games,” but he was left on the sidelines. Inspired by the tune, everyone can participate in reindeer games at your home. These types of games can include tests of endurance and dexterity, like fruitcake-eating contests, running races or doing hurdle competitions in the yard.

Candy Cane Home Runs

Participants can see how well they can launch a marshmallow into the outfield by hitting it with a candy cane taking the place of the baseball bat. Each participant gets three swings. The person with the most home runs wins.

Guess the Gift

In this game, party hosts wrap up five oddly shaped gifts specifically for the game (the gifts may be oddly shaped or just the wrapping as a decoy). Players take turns trying to guess what is inside and mark

down their answers on sheets. One by one the gifts are revealed. If anyone guesses the gift, it is given as a prize. If more than one person guesses a gift, come up with a fun way to break the tie, such as rock, paper, scissors or thumb wrestling.

Christmas Karaoke

Singing traditional carols and popular holiday tunes is not uncommon come December. In this competitive version of karaoke, singers have to keep on singing, even when the lyrics get turned off or covered to test their true knowledge of these songs.

Present Stackers

This requires keeping a collection of oddly shaped gifts at the ready. Game participants try to stack the presents as tall as they can without them toppling over.

Fishing for Fun

Hang strings on the straight ends of candy canes to fashion fishing poles, with the curved ends serving as the “hooks.” Participants try to “fish” smaller candy canes out of a bowl and see how many they can reel in.

The “No L” Game

The game referee has a list of a few categories (i.e., food, sports, colors, cars, etc.) and players are split into a few teams. When the category is called, the teams have to jot down as many words as they can pertaining to the category that do not have a letter “L” in them before a timer runs out.

holiday season, he remembered an indelible image of wreaths on graves at Arlington and devised a way to put those wreaths to use honoring the country’s veterans.

Arlington National Cemetery was the first place to receive wreaths. Since then, the movement has grown to include cemeteries across the nation. In 2022, Wreaths Across America and its national network of volunteers placed more than 2.7 million sponsored veterans’ wreaths on headstones of our nation’s service members at

3,702 participating locations.

Although veterans are remembered each Memorial Day and Veterans Day, they can be honored 365 days a year for their service and sacrifices. Wreaths Across America offers an important way to set aside time during the holiday season to show appreciation for veterans who are no longer with us.

Those looking to get involved can visit www.wreathsassamerica.org to learn more about volunteer opportunities or bringing WAA into their communities.



We hope each day of the holiday season is filled with good times, love and laughter.



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Simplify holiday cooking with these easy suggestions

Food is an important component of the holiday season for millions of people across the globe. Many a holiday host has wrestled with what to serve for their gathering and how to prepare meals while still finding time to spend with loved ones. Sometimes simplicity is the way to go when hosting for the holidays. Just because certain dishes are less labor-intensive to prepare does not mean they lack flavor. Hosts can consider these tips to simplify holiday cooking this year.

· Utilize shop-from-home services. Supermarkets can be particularly busy this time of year. By shopping from the comfort of home, holiday hosts can sort through their lists and let someone else navigate crowded store aisles. The small fee involved for this service can be well worth the time saved.

· Scale back the sides. Some hosts feel an impressive dinner spread is one with plenty of options. Several side dishes require a lot of time and money, and such foods may take away from the star of the table. Guests might fill up on rolls, potatoes and salads, leaving little room for the main course. Scaling back on sides creates more time for hosts to mingle with family and ensures everyone gets their fill of the main course.

· Delegate some of the work. Asking guests to bring a little something to the meal doesn't immediately turn it into a potluck. However, it can reduce some of the work the host has to do. Figure out who is bound to be an early arrival, and ask that person to bring an appetizer. Individuals who like to be fashionably late can bring side dishes or desserts. Delegating beverage detail also can be a time-saver.

· Familiar is often fabulous. A major holiday is seldom the right time to experiment with a new, labor-intensive dish. Rather than risk an epic fail, hosts should stick to meals they have prepared before. Also, familiar flavors may appeal to a greater number of guests.

· Include some prepared foods. While it is perfectly alright to cater the entire dinner, that can prove costly. If budget doesn't allow for a fully catered meal, supplement with some prepared dishes to help save time, particularly those recipes that can be complicated.

· Make it a buffet. Sit-down dinners require careful timing to ensure all foods are set out hot and ready-to-eat. A buffet-style meal involves preparing trays of food in advance, and then setting them to heat in chafing dishes until meal time. This involves far less strategizing with meal preparation and frees up time for hosts to spend with guests.



Holiday meals require a lot of effort, but some handy suggestions can ensure hosts have ample time to spend with loved ones.

The celebration of Las Posadas

The story of the birth of Jesus Christ is one that has been told for more than 2,000 years and serves as one of the foundations of Christianity. The Nativity is an important component of Christmas celebrations, and Nativity scenes frequently are included in town-wide and personal celebrations. Perhaps nowhere is the Nativity story told with more faith-based gusto than through the annual celebration of Las Posadas, which originated in Mexico and Guatemala.

Las Posadas is a vibrant and meaningful tradition that unites communities and celebrates the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and how they tried to find safe refuge before the birth of their child. Joseph and Mary were unable to find lodging in Bethlehem, and had to shelter in a stable, where Jesus was born.

According to Britannica, the



Las Posadas is a communal celebration that kicks off the Christmas season with a procession reminiscent of the trip Joseph and Mary took just before Baby Jesus was born.

religious festival is celebrated primarily in Mexico between December 16 and 24, but also in enclaves in the United States and elsewhere with high numbers of

Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants. "Posada" is the Spanish word for "inn" or "lodging." The celebration of Las Posadas involves a procession of carolers

led by a small child dressed as an angel. The tradition can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when Spanish missionaries sought to teach indigenous people about the Christian faith.

Over nine nights (representing the nine months of pregnancy), participants reenact Mary and Joseph's search for lodging, going from house to house in the community. The procession also includes singing, carrying candles and often dressing as the holy couple. Traditionally, the procession is refused lodging at each stop, though the hosts of homes visited will often provide refreshments. Scripture is read during these visits, and Mass is held each day after the procession. Additional components associated with Las Posadas include:

- Piñatas
- Traditional foods
- Nativity scenes
- Community involvement



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Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Luke 2:14

Tips to make holiday dinners more affordable



Holiday hosts can embrace various strategies to save money on family meals this season.

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“Eat, drink and be merry” is a familiar refrain come the holiday season. Hosting

a holiday dinner is a great way to welcome family and friends and encourage them to embrace the festive nature of the season. However, the high cost of foods and other essentials may have certain holiday hosts rethinking their menus and their guest lists this year.

A 2024 Pew Research Poll showed Americans worried about the state of the economy cite the price of food and the cost of housing as their foremost concerns. More than 90 percent of Americans say they are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the cost of food and consumer goods.

Average annual food-at-home prices were 5 percent higher in 2023 than in 2022, according to the USDA Economic Research Service. Inflation has been a key topic of discussion for much of the last three years. While data from

the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates inflation continues to cool off from all-time highs, consumers are still anxious about how food prices are affecting their bottom lines and their holiday entertaining plans. According to Farmdoc Daily, which offers agriculture-based data analysis, 68 percent of U.S. consumers expected rising food prices to impact their holiday meals in 2023. Similar concerns may prevail in 2024.

Stretching holiday entertaining dollars comes down to being savvy. With that in mind, hosts can consider these meal modification strategies this holiday season.

· Replace a high-cost protein with a more affordable alternative. Sometimes a holiday meal calls for pulling out all of the stops, and that may mean spending more on a special

main dish. Rather than a luxury like beef tenderloin or prime rib roast, consider a less expensive dish, such as a pork tenderloin, roasted chicken or even seafood.

· Add extra side dishes. Incorporate an inexpensive item like rice, beans or an extra vegetable side dish into the meal so that plates can be filled with the less expensive foods and fewer high-cost items.

· Shop the sales. Plan meals around a supermarket circular. While you may have had one holiday dinner idea in mind, once you see what the stores are putting on sale you can stock up on those items and build the dinner around them. If you find a good deal several weeks away from the holidays, buy the items and freeze them until they’re needed.

· Buy generic or store brands. Chanc-

es are no one will notice if you use generic or store brand ingredients, which can be considerably cheaper than their brand-name counterparts. Many are even manufactured in the same facilities that produce the name brand stuff.

· Make an affordable drink. Alcohol costs can add up when you try to cater to everyone’s tastes and preferences. Make one or two bulk drinks, like a holiday punch or signature cocktail, so you can keep alcohol costs in check.

· Stretch the snacks. Instead of a charcuterie board filled with expensive cheeses and meats, opt for dips and raw vegetables or a low-cost cheese ball made with cream cheese and herbs with crackers. Keep snacks to a minimum; otherwise, guests may fill up and then not have room for dinner.

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As we remember the great events & programming we hosted in 2024, we are excited to continue to grow & expand those offerings in 2025.

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