

What Christmas means to me

By Rev. David King, United Methodist Church
When I think of Christmas, there are a number of things that come to mind.
First is friends and family that I haven't seen, heard from, or been with for a while. This is the one time of year when we reconnect, even if just until next Christmas.
Second, I think of the busy-ness of the season in the

life of the church. There are special services to plan and prepare for, parties to schedule in, and school and family functions.
Finally, when I think of Christmas, I think of hope. I think of the hope we all have because Jesus, the Son of God and the Lord of Light, came into the darkness of our world to save us and lead us into His Light.
(See Christmas, Page 4)

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NEWSBRIEFS

2003-04 Waterfowl drawing underway

The 2003-04 waterfowl gun raffle is underway. The second annual event sponsored by Friends of Main Street gives you a chance to win one of 25 guns. Tickets are \$20 and available from any Main Street member, at Johnny's Sport Shop, Sportsman's Restaurant and other Eagle Lake merchants. Tickets will be on sale at Austin's BBQ Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. You may also e-mail your request for tickets to mainst1eltx@yahoo.com. Proceeds are used to enhance the appearance of our city.

Applications for Habitat House now available

Persons currently living in substandard housing who would like to be considered for home ownership for the next new Weimar Habitat House should call 979-732-5677 or 732-3549 for an application. Applications must be completed and returned by Jan. 1, 2004.

Stamped Elite tryouts being held

The Stampede Elite 10U girl's SELECT softball team are holding open tryouts through Dec. Please contact Coach Neal at 281-238-8374 or by e-mail at nhuebottr@hessinc.cc for more information or to schedule a tryout time. All positions are considered open for this tryout. Interested players must be enthusiastic, willing to play hard at all times, willing to make a firm commitment to the team, and must demonstrate good sportsmanship. Preference will be given to 1994 birthdays.

Sheridan 4-H party is Sunday

The Sheridan 4-H Club will hold its Christmas party Sunday, Dec. 21, at 1 p.m. at the Varley home.

Candlelight Services at UMC Churches

The United Methodist Church (UMC) of Eagle Lake and Lehrer Memorial UMC of Garwood are having Christmas Eve Candlelight Services Wednesday, Dec. 24. The Eagle Lake service will be at 6 p.m. and the service in Garwood at 7:30. Everyone in the Eagle Lake/Lissie/Altair and Garwood/Nada communities are invited to come to these very special services. The Eagle Lake UMC is located at the corner of Prairie and Cemetery Streets. The Lehrer Memorial UMC is located at the corner of Baxter and Mansfield in Garwood. For more information, contact Rev. David King at 234-3288 or 758-3424.

E.H. Henry Alumni Christmas Party is Dec. 24

The E.H. Henry Alumni will hold their Christmas Party at the Eagle Lake Community Center Wednesday, Dec. 24, from 7 p.m. to midnight. Music will be provided by DW Sounds. Admission is \$5 per person at the door. Note: An alumni meeting will be held at 6 p.m. every third Thursday of the month at White Cloud Missionary Baptist Church, Old Altair Rd.; Rev. Obie Rhodes, pastor. For more information, contact Deloris Milligan at 243-7363.

'A Night in White' set for Saturday

The 20th Century District Association of Texas Minister's and Deacons' Wives Conference will present "A Night in White" this Saturday, Dec. 20, at 6:30 p.m. at the Camp Zion Rising Star Baptist Church. The theme will be Revelations 3:4. Rev. Clarence Owens is Auxiliary Moderator; Rev. T.E. Kuykendall will be the guest speaker.

Closing for holidays

The Colorado County Courthouse will be closed Thursday and Friday, Dec. 25 and 26, in observance of Christmas and Jan. 1 and 2 in observance of New Year's Day. The Eagle Lake City Offices will be closed Dec. 25 and Dec. 26. There will be no trash collection on those days. Trash collection will resume Monday, Dec. 29, with Monday's route. First National Bank will close at noon Wednesday, Dec. 24, and be closed Dec. 25. Winterman Library will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dec. 24 and closed Dec. 25. The same time schedule will be in effect for Dec. 31 and Jan. 1.

New Year's Eve fireworks display

Kick off your New Year's Eve celebration at the 5th annual fireworks display in Eagle Lake. The show will take place on Calhoun Road beginning at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31. Anyone interested in helping with the event can call or come by the Eagle Lake Post Office for more information.

Nativity to host 3rd annual New Year's Eve gala

The Parish of the Nativity is planning its Third Annual Gala for New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, Didner Hall, 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. A \$25 ticket will admit someone to all the festivities including an open bar, a full banquet meal, music, dancing, a silent auction, and a raffle. Nativity Gala tickets may be purchased at the Parish Office (545 S. Austin Rd., 979-234-2842), Marcy's Beauty Salon, S&W Auto Parts and Tresses Hair Salon.

Tercera Anual Gala Natividad del Año Nuevo, 31 de Diciembre, Salon Didner, 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Un boleto de \$25 por persona será para todas las festividades que incluyen refresco en la barra, un banquete, musica, baile, subasta en silencio, y rifa de dinero. Boleto para la celebración pueden ser comprados en la Oficina Parroquial, (545 S. Austin Rd., 979-234-2842), Marcy's Beauty Salon, S&W Auto Parts y Tresses Hair Salon.

Childbirth classes begin Jan. 5, 2004

Will your baby arrive between Feb. 15 and April 15, 2004? Come join other moms and coaches for Childbirth Classes at Gulf Coast Medical Center (GCMC) (See Newsbriefs, Page 13)

See Hospice 'Celebration of Life' tree at FNB

The Hospice "Celebration of Life" Christmas tree is now lit and decorated with the ornaments in honor or memory of someone special in the lobby of First National Bank (FNB) of Eagle Lake. Ralph Truly is the "Celebration of



Ralph M. Truly is the "Celebrating of Life" Patron this year. Pictured with him is his daughter, Sandy Bendy, a member of the Hospice Support, Inc. Board of Directors. Headlight Photo by Carol Cardenas

Life" Patron for this year. Please come by the bank and see the tree.

There are still ornaments left for sale, so it is not too late to order yours.

A donation of \$15 or more may be made in honor of a birth of a child, in memory of a loved one or friend, or to honor someone special. There are order forms at the FNB in Eagle Lake, Eagle Lake Drugstore or Truly Properties. Please pick one up and mail to the Hospice Support Inc. address in El Campo and specify the Eagle Lake tree for your ornaments to be hung here. Those ornaments that are not to be mailed, may be picked up at Truly Pro-

perties after the holidays.

The proceeds will benefit ill patients and their families served by the El Campo Hospice agency, community education on end-of-life-care and staff support. As many of you are aware, Hospice Support Care provides services that enhance the final stages of a patient's life by controlling pain and managing symptoms, providing counseling and support, and preparing the patient and family to face illness comfortably and confidently. Community support is vital to the success of this special service. Thank you for all of your support!

Christmas decorating winners announced

Congratulations to the winners of the Christmas Decorating Contest. The Eagle Lake businesses were in high fashion last Saturday evening, showing off for the Christmas Parade.

Nineteen businesses threw their hats in the ring for the decorating contest, sponsored by Main Street-Eagle

Lake. Each winner will be awarded a gift certificate to be used at any one of the participating businesses.

Separate categories were judged for the businesses in the downtown historic district and for other businesses in Eagle Lake.

(See Winners, Page 4)

COUNCIL NEWS

Trees and billboards are taking their toll on our national forests and our City Council!

AEP representatives attended to discuss the trimming of trees in our area. The AEP representatives said they have always had good relations with Eagle Lake and would like to see it continue. Their first priority was safety; their second was outages in the area.

AEP said they knew we were concerned with oak wilt, but they cannot just cut and trim trees in Jan. and Feb. They do try to take proper pruning cuts and not leave a collar. Sometimes they have to cut a tree in a way that's not especially pleasing to the eyes, but they do the best they can. AEP said they have to take off enough growth so they don't have to come back to the same trees every year.

Councilman Mike Morales said, "We don't want to sit on Council and tell you how to do your job."

Councilman Eric Nethery said he's all for preservation, but he doesn't want his lights or the lights in the area going out. He said there has to be a balance between safety, preservation and beautification among the groups.

Nethery concluded by saying he wanted the two groups to get together and strike a balance. After that, he doesn't want to hear anyone about it.

Nethery added we can't have school buses dodging tree limbs and such so safety has to be a main issue.

Evangeline Whorton tried to speak up, but was denied since it was Council business and not open for public debate at the time.

Morales asked if we could put it back on the agenda. He said the new ordinance had Thurston Webb looking at every tree that was cut, but there is not time for that.

Final conclusion was that there will be an open forum on tree trimming Tuesday, Jan. 13, at 5:30 in the Council Chambers. EVERYONE IS INVITED! Put it on your calendars if you are interested.

Ike Clayton was present concerning water and sewer at his property. Council tabled any action until they could get more information.

Rice Medical Center was there for the Council's blessing to put up a directional sign for the hospital's emergency room usage.

Mayor René Cooper-Scott asked if they could get a highway department sign with hospital on it like other towns have to show the directions. There are two such signs in place, but are obstructed by limbs!

Rhonda Bridges was there for Main Street to ask Council to approve the new boundaries to be sent to Austin.

Council approved purchase of new fire truck and city sewer truck. Right after the approval, the firemen present had to leave to go out on a call. God bless them all!

In other business, Council

•Heard a report from the Board of Adjustment;

•Approved new appointments of T

Lang and Joyce Banks to the Board of Adjustment;

•Adopted the Texas Colorado River Floodplain Coalition Hazard Mitigation action plan for the Lower Colorado River Basin;

•Presented administrative and Council reports; and

•Ended with wishing everyone a happy holiday!

I urge anyone who is concerned with the tree trimming issue to be at the open forum Jan. 13 at 5:30. This is a time for you to be heard! If you aren't there, please don't complain later-we will have enough people who were there complaining!

The downtown shops all look great with their lights and decorations. I love the train at Struss' and the villages at Royal Cleaners. Creative Expressions always has a neat display window no matter what season it is. It's nice to see lights downtown at night, including the Main Street lights outlining the buildings. Thanks to all of you who took the time to make it happen.

There are a lot of pretty lights in the neighborhoods, also. I hope all of you get to drive around and enjoy them. I had to threaten certain members of my household to finally get lights up at my house. I've only seen them once because it's usually bedtime I get

home. I wonder how much I would have to threaten to get everything put on a timer so the lights would be shining when I get home. Hmm...

This has been a good holiday season even if it did seem to come rather quickly. I love Christmas and, this year, decided not to get bogged down in the little things. It seems to have helped, but of course, I still haven't seen my outdoor lighting yet so maybe I'm getting a little too laid back.

One sad thing is I have lost my Peking goose and Peking duck to a visiting neighborhood dog. I really enjoyed having them around for company and I find I miss them.

I have enjoyed seeing old friends

and hearing from old friends through Christmas cards. I promised I would send those things out this year, but the deletion of them was part of my stress relief. I'm glad not everyone decided to delete them from their holidays!

I wish all of you happy holidays and may they be full of laughter, love, joy and a lot of giggles thrown in for good measure. I know not everyone in Eagle Lake celebrates Christmas, but for all who do, I hope you remember why we celebrate Christmas. The saying "Jesus is the Reason" still holds true. May we all remember that in the hustle and bustle of Christmas.

Joy to the world and to you, too! Happy Holidays!

Bring in the New Year at the Nativity Gala!

The 3rd Annual Nativity Gala will be held in Didner Hall once again on New Year's Eve and a \$25 ticket will admit you to all the festivities including an open bar, a full banquet meal of stuffed pork tenderloin and all the trimmings, three tables of fabulous desserts, music, dancing, a silent auction,

and a money raffle.

The meal is under the direction of head chef Marcella Garcia, so everyone knows the food will be fantastic. Marcella was the chef in charge of the Parish Turkey Dinner in Nov. and, if you thought that was good, she says, (See Gala, Page 13)

Main Street awards grant to Tyler Studio

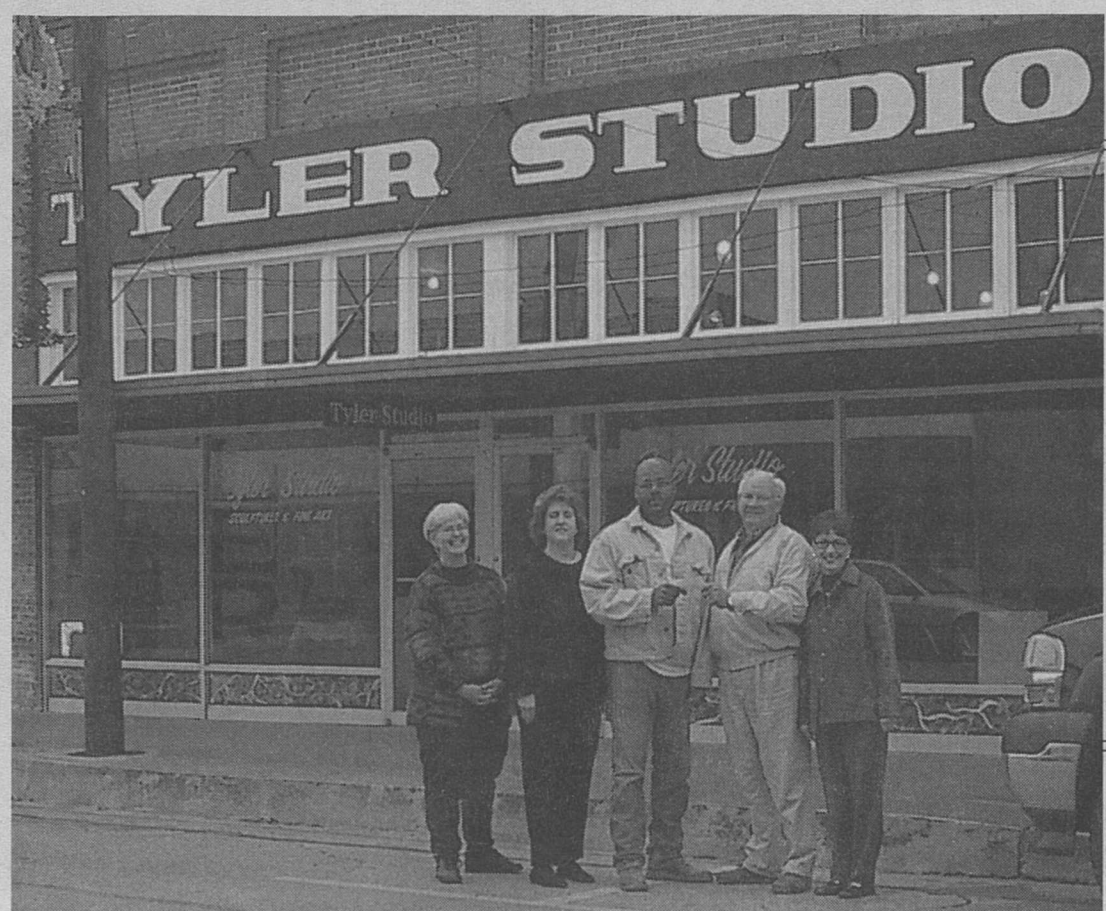
Main Street Advisory Board Members Sandy Bendy and Mary Ann Kaluza and Main Street Manager Rhonda Bridges, along with Louis Schorlemmer, Main Street Design Chairman, presented Tony Tyler, owner of Tyler Studio, with a check for a grant for new signage.

Main Street provides grants for downtown building owners/tenants to help in renovating their building. There is a matching grant for renovating the façade and windows of buildings, and a grant for signage.

To apply for either one or all of these grants, please contact Rhonda

Bridges, Main Street Manager, at 234-2640 or Louis Schorlemmer, Main Street Design Chairman.

If you are interested in applying for a grant, you must contact one of these people before the work is done and keep all receipts of expenditures.



Rhonda Bridges, Mary Ann Kaluza, Tony Tyler, Louis Schorlemmer and Sandy Bendy were on hand for the presentation. Headlight Photo by Carol Cardenas

WEEKLY BIRD REPORT

The following migratory bird hunting report, prepared for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by Bink Grimes, was last updated Dec. 10.

Coastal Prairies: Duck hunting remains spotty at best on leveed ponds and flooded rice. Fair numbers of gadwall, wigeon, teal and shovellers have been taken; however, hunters scoring half-limits should feel fortunate.

Pintail season opened Dec. 11, which should help duck harvest. Duck hunters have had to watch pintails readily decoy over duck and goose spreads since the season began.

Goose hunting is good in the El Campo, Cordele and Provident City areas. Snows are decoying over rice and plowed ground despite high ceilings.

Goose hunting has been fair at best near Garwood and Katy. Hunters there claim a shortage of birds to be the problem.

Specklebellies have turned their noses to spreads as of late. One hunt this week produced 90 geese, 84 of which were light geese, a bit of an anomaly in goose hunting.

Prospects are fair to good.