

A Little Christmas Magic

By Chris Thacker, Pastor, First Baptist Church

There is something special about the holiday season. It's not just the lights and decorations. It's not simply the fruitcakes and mistletoe. It's not only the family gatherings and the eggnog. Boxes aren't the only things under the Christmas tree. Joy and goodwill are waiting to jump out from behind every corner and yell "Surprise!" Hope and peace are in the air.

Christmas is a magical time of the year. It makes you believe that reindeer really can fly... that chubby men in red suits really can fit down a chimney... that elves really are expert toy-makers.

Through the hocus-pocus of Christmas, family members can tolerate each other just a little more. Hearts can (See Magic, Page 4)

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NEWSBRIEFS

EOF to hold New Year's service

Equippers Outreach Fellowship (EOF) will hold a "Shout At Midnight" service at 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31, with a meal to be served at 7. Please bring a covered dish. A nightly service will also be held Jan. 1-3 at 7 p.m. with E' Vann Walker. For more information, call 979-725-8233.

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.

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 nhuebott@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.

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, (Christmas Eve) and be closed Dec. 25. Wintermann 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. The Eagle Lake Headlight will be closed Wednesday through Friday, Dec. 24-26.

New Year's Eve fireworks display

Kick off your New Year's Eve celebration at the 5th annual firework's 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 may 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 refrescos 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.

Applications for Habitat House due Jan. 1

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.

Senior Citizen's Dance is Jan. 2

The public is invited to a Senior Citizen's Dance, a place to meet old and new friends, Friday, Jan. 2, 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. at the Eagle Lake Community Center. Rudy & His Czech Mates will provide the music. Admission is \$5 per person. For more information, call 979-234-3795.

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) in Wharton! Classes are Monday, Jan. 5, to Feb. 16 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the GCMC classrooms. Registration fee is \$60. For more information or to register, call 979-282-6280.

Lions Club stew supper is Jan. 7

The Garwood Lions Club will hold a stew supper Wednesday, Jan. 7, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Garwood Volunteer Fire Department. Eat in for \$5.50 (includes crackers and tea); or take it to go. Bring your own container (\$8 a quart). For information, call Ken Danklefs at 758-3914.

Free pesticide certification class

The Colorado County Farm Bureau (CCFB) and the Colorado County Agriculture Extension are offering a free CEU course Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2004 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Colorado County Agriculture Building, 316 Spring St. in Columbus. Class is set up to review laws and regulatory procedures. Please contact the CCFB at 979-732-2383 to register for the class before Jan. 12.



Resident hit by train

An Eagle Lake resident, riding a bicycle across the railroad tracks at Lake Ave., was struck by a south-bound train late Monday afternoon. He was LifeFlighted from the scene.

Due to this week's early deadline, no other information was available at press time.

Headlight Photo by Carol Cardenas

Don't miss the New Year's Eve fireworks!

The New Year's Eve celebration will blast-off early this Wednesday with the 5th annual Eagle Lake Fireworks Display to be held on Calhoun Road at 6:30 p.m. The event is open to the public at no charge and everyone is invited to join in the fun and excitement of the 45-minute display.

The success of the annual New

Year's Eve display, as well as the July 4th show, would not be possible without the support of the many individuals, businesses and organizations that donate time, money, equipment and supplies.

According to the producers of the show, it's that devotion, along with the tremendous help of volunteers, that en-

courages them to keep this project alive and growing.

The crew has been working on the show for over a month and is planning a bigger and better show than the July 4th celebration.

A special tribute is planned midway through the display to honor America. Later, there will be a salute to the suc-

cessful Rice Raider football team.

The show will include 300 rockets, 300 artillery shells, over 200-multi-shot "cakes," as well as other specialty display items.

Weather permitting, music will accompany the beautiful, "bursts and bangs" and, hopefully, according to the crew, the sound will reach more of the large crowd the annual event has been attracting.

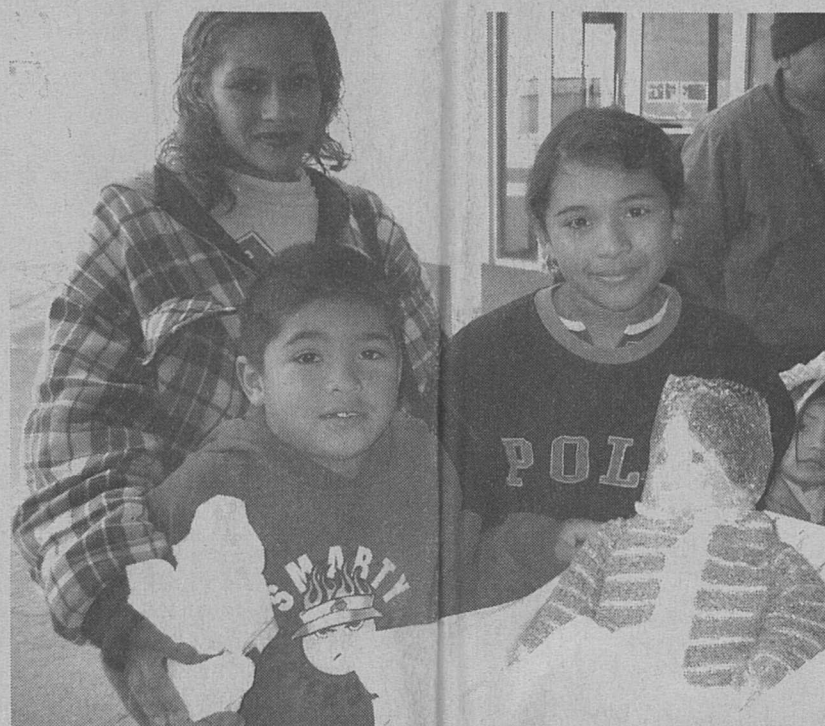
Fans are encouraged to come out early and stay late to enjoy music provided by the sound crew.

Although parking is plentiful, not everyone will be able to sit on the front row. But, don't worry; the aerial displays will be visible from just about anywhere in the vicinity. Some assistance with parking will be available.

In case of inclement weather, the show will be postponed until 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 1, 2004.

For those interested, donations will be accepted at the conclusion of the show or, if you wish, you may call or come by the Eagle Lake Post Office to get more information anytime during normal business hours.

American Legion distributes toys



Above, one happy little girl received a doll from the Legion's Santas. Below are but some of the more than 160 children the American Legion Post helped by adding to their Christmas. Photos by Helen Craig

The American Legion Post 108 would like to sincerely thank all the generous people and organizations who contributed to this year's toy drive, both with toys and with money.

Also, thanks to Struss Auto, The Furniture Shoppe and Wallis State Bank for serving as collection centers.

Ken, Vic Scott, Dave Haas, Hugh Sheridan and Ted Brunner did most of the distributing.

Helen Craig served as the Post's "official photographer" and coffee maker.

Nativity Parish has full Christmas Season prepared

Because our feast day, the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, falls on Dec. 25, the opening day of the Christmas Season, we try to make a big deal of the whole Christmas Season.

With Christmas and the universal Church, we in Eagle Lake celebrate the human family with wonderful feasts, such as...

The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, (*Dec. 24, 10:30 p.m.-Closing Posada, 11:30 p.m. Carols; *Dec. 25, Midnight Mass and 9 a.m. Mass);

The Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in the United States-the first Sunday after Christmas Day, (Dec. 28 *8 a.m. Mass (Spanish) and 10 Mass (English), Caroling at 5 p.m. at Kevin Courts and 6 p.m. at Rice Medical Center);

The Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and the Octave of Christmas, Jan. 1, (*12 Noon Mass);

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, in the U.S., the first Sunday of the new year, (Jan. 4 *8 a.m. Mass with baptisms (Spanish) and 10 a.m. Mass with baptisms (English), Epiphany Celebration *6 p.m. Evening Prayer followed by the Procession of the Magi to the Parish Office at 545 S. Austin Road for Christmas refreshments and fireworks to celebrate the Epiphany Star;

Concluding the Christmas Season is the Baptism of the Lord, the second Sunday of the new year, (Jan. 11 *8 a.m. Mass (Spanish) and 10 a.m. Mass (English)).

*Events held in the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Even though our Nativity Gala on New Year's Eve is not a liturgical event, not a public prayer, it is a very important event for us and indicative of the fullness of our Christmas celebration.

Please see the Newsbriefs for information about the Nativity Gala.

It is also important to us that we are providing a safe and close celebration for the community to bring in the new year.

After the excitement of midnight has settled down, we traditionally have a short time of prayer for peace.

Everyone is invited to share with us our Christmas joy. Come and help us celebrate the human family this and every Christmas!

New Year's driving resolutions

Let the confetti fly, wear your funny hats and welcome the New Year with good cheer, but resolve to drive responsibly this New Year's holiday.

Anyone planning to consume alcoholic beverages should have someone else—who hasn't been drinking drive them home.

Starting at midnight on New Years Day, Operation Holiday will go into effect.

Extra troopers will be on the lookout for speeders, seat belt violators,

reckless drivers and drunk drivers from Jan. 1st through Jan. 4th to reduce the number of traffic accidents and traffic fatalities.

"If you choose to celebrate the new year, please drive sober. If you plan to drink, please designate a driver."

"We want all Texans to be around to enjoy 2004," said Col. Thomas A. Davis Jr., director of the DPS.

While making your New Year's resolutions, please remember to add "Improve Driving Habits" to your list!

Here are some good habits to employ:

- *Make sure everyone is buckled up.
- *Drive sober.
- *Use your turn signals.
- *Do not tailgate.
- *Obey the speed limit.
- *Do not speed up, block lanes, slam or tap on brakes.
- *Report extreme cases of reckless driving to the appropriate authorities.
- *Do not retaliate, gesture or make eye contact.

What Christmas means to me

Eddie Winkler, Pastor, Catholic Parish of the Nativity

Christmas has always meant a time for family for me. For the Winkler clan that grew from seven siblings, of which I am number six, the tradition has been to gather at my parents' home three miles east of Schulenburg on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24.

We spend the day together, cooking, eating and drinking, decorating, catching up on each other's lives, exchanging gifts at nightfall and enjoying revelry around a Christmas bonfire in the night!

Come to find out, with my studies of our religious tradition in the seminary, my family, as most, has the focus in the right place.

Christmas for us Christians is the celebration of the incarnation, God coming to us in the human flesh or God in the human flesh encountering us. And to be truly human, God would have to be born of a woman, and therefore into a family.

To celebrate the incarnation is to celebrate the family, in whatever shape or size it may come in. For we must

remember that Jesus was born into a poor mid-eastern migrant family. Mary, his mother, was unwed at the time of her pregnancy with him, and Joseph was not his biological father.

With Christmas we celebrate the human family in all its diversity, in whatever race, class, condition, or way of life a family may hold to, giving God praise for every child born.

The Catholic tradition has also impressed upon me the true celebration of Christmas of about two and a half weeks following Dec. 25. Remembering that the 12 days of Christmas are from Dec. 26 to Jan. 6, ending on the traditional feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. Universally January 6 has also been an appropriate day for the giving of gifts with the commemoration of the gifts of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12). So I've come to come to celebrate the family with the fullness of the Church's great Christmas tradition, not for just a day, and not before Dec. 24 (a time that is spent in preparation for Christmas), but for a season. To understand

better of what I'm writing about, please see the related article, describing the Parish of the Nativity's plans for the Christmas Season. And y'all have a merry Christmas!



The following migratory bird hunting report, prepared for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by Bink Grimes, was last updated Dec. 17.

Coastal Prairies: Decoying action for snow geese has been solid. A large amount of juvenile birds and Ross' geese are contributing to the fine shooting. High winds have kept many flocks on the deck and helped pass-shooting.

Duck hunting is fair at best. More ducks have moved on the prairie with the recent front.

Recent rains should help hunting by recharging roost ponds. Mature specklebellies have been tough to decoy and are segregating from light goose flocks. Many geese are moving to plowed ground after cool fronts.

Sandhill crane season in Zone C opened Dec. 20. The limit is two birds per man.

A sandhill crane permit is required to harvest cranes (free of charge at any license outlet).

Prospects are fair to good.