

The Macon County
NEWS
& Shopping Guide

Christmas

GIFT GUIDE



2020

Small Business Saturday rivals Black Friday, Cyber Monday

Gregg Thompson
Director NFIB

Small businesses aren't as glitzy as the banks and retail chains that are based here, but they are what drives North Carolina's economy.

They account for 99.6 percent of all businesses in the state and employ 45 percent of North Carolina's private-sector workforce, and while it's news whenever a big corporation adds a few hundred jobs someplace, small businesses created over 62,000 net jobs statewide in 2019, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration.

We need our small businesses, and small businesses need us, especially now.

Our economy was doing pretty well until the coronavirus reached us back in the spring. Social distancing and other health restrictions resulted in a sudden, sharp decline in sales. Millions of workers lost their jobs, and some businesses simply closed.

That's why my association, the National Federation of Independent Business, is asking everyone to shop local on Small Business Saturday and throughout the holiday season.

Small Business Saturday, the Saturday

after Thanksgiving, originated 10 years ago in response to another economic crisis, the Great Recession. It was created to encourage people to shop at small, independent businesses still struggling to re-



cover from the economic downturn. The idea was to encourage people to take a break from the usual chain stores and support the local businesses that support their communities throughout the year.

And it worked. Small Business Saturday has joined Black Friday and Cyber Monday as one of the most-talked-about shopping days of the season. Last year, Americans spent a record \$19.6 billion on

Small Business Saturday, according to a survey from American Express and NFIB.

Of course, this year's Small Business Saturday will be different.

Shoppers will be asked to mask up and keep their distance from one another, but that doesn't mean they can't still #ShopSmall. If you're unable to or uncomfortable with shopping in person, you can still shop local businesses online and have their purchases delivered or pick them up curbside. That's especially true of local restaurants. Even upscale sit-down restaurants are doing a brisk business these days

in take-out.

Another option is buying gift cards or gift certificates to your favorite businesses to use once this pandemic is behind us.

However you approach it, the important thing is to support local businesses.

Some of them may be doing OK, all things considered, but others are in trouble. When NFIB surveyed its small business members last month, nearly one-fifth said their businesses could last only seven months to a year under current economic conditions, while 15 percent said three to six months and 3 percent said they might have to close in a month or two.

We can't afford to let that happen.

On the national front, NFIB is calling on Congress to pass additional financial assistance to help small businesses get through this crisis, but, locally, we can make a difference.

Small businesses aren't owned by some faceless corporation. They're owned by – and employ – our family and friends and neighbors. When we help, we're really supporting each other.

Gregg Thompson is the North Carolina state director of the National Federation of Independent Business.

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Christmas parade this Sunday

The Franklin Chamber of Commerce announces its plans for this year's Annual Christmas Parade which will officially ring in the holiday season. The celebration will be held Sunday, Nov. 29, beginning at 3 p.m.

This year's celebration will be held with a number of safety precautions in place due to Covid-19 restrictions. The route has been extended onto Highlands Road so that spectators can self-distance. No walkers will be allowed and no items may be handed out including candy, coupons, etc. Spectators are asked to park and remain in their vehicles to watch the "Drive-Up" celebration. Participants and

spectators are asked to wear a mask while at the celebration. Complimentary masks will be available in front of Town Hall and in the parking lot of City Plumbing & Electric Supply on the day of the parade. Masks will also be available in advance at the Franklin Chamber of Commerce. "All

of these precautions are being put in place for the safety of our community" said Franklin Chamber's Executive Director Linda Harbuck.

Law enforcement, emergency and medical personnel, educators and all essential workers will serve as this year's Grand Marshals to thank them for their unwavering service during this unprecedented year.

Entries will line up along Church Street behind the courthouse. The route will begin by pulling out on the top of Town Hill beside Town Hall. The route will proceed down Main Street turning left at the Lazy Hiker Brewing Company onto Porter Street. Then turn left onto Palmer Street. This year the route will turn onto Highlands Road extending the route to enable social distancing. The route will end at the Franklin Flea Market.

For additional information, contact the Franklin Chamber of Commerce by call-



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Town of Franklin planning modified holiday activities

The Town of Franklin will officially welcome the holidays during Winter Wonderland a two night event held in downtown Franklin, held on consecutive Saturdays, Nov. 28, and Dec. 5, from 5 to 8 each evening.

“COVID-19 continues to have an impact on our ability to organize events that follow guidelines for the safety of all involved,” said Town of Franklin Mayor Bob Scott. “This year’s Winter Wonderland will take place but has been modified to protect those attending.”

Protocols in place for Winter Wonderland include the requirement of face masks and Social Distancing. Main Street will be closed both nights of the event to allow for more space to Social Distance. Detours will be clearly marked to plenty of free parking in the downtown area.

“The first night of Winter Wonderland will include our Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. This event will be live streamed, so keep an eye on our Facebook events page for details,” said Mayor Scott.

Saturday, November 28th is Small Business and the traditional kick-off day of the holidays in Franklin, NC. The Small Business Saturday initiative, headed by Ameri-

can Express, shifts the focus from Black Friday and Cyber Monday to supporting small, local businesses. The Town of Franklin is proud to again be a Neighbor-

hood Champion of Small Business Saturday. Both nights of Winter Wonderland will feature a visit from Santa! He will be roving through the streets and businesses.

“Our staff is in the process of adding additional holiday decorations to the Gazebo on the Square and other areas of Franklin, much like we did for Fall,” said Summer Woodard, Town Manager. “There will be many holiday photo opportunities that can be enjoyed all through the New Year.”

Downtown Merchants will also be open late offering great shopping and plenty of great gift ideas for the holidays. In addition, select businesses will feature living window displays depicting different scenes of the holiday season.

“Knowing that this event is a cherished part of holiday traditions for both visitors and locals alike, our staff has spent many months exploring every avenue imaginable to hold Winter Wonderland in a normal fashion,” said Mayor Scott. “We encourage everyone that attends to follow the proper safety protocols and still enjoy the spirit of the season in Franklin.”

Winter Wonderland is sponsored by the Town of Franklin. For additional information, visit www.Townof-FranklinNC.com or call (828) 524-2516. You can also follow along on Facebook @FranklinNCEvents.



The Town of Franklin is decking the halls and stringing the lights for the upcoming Christmas season. Photo opp stations are being set up on the square for some exceptional holiday pictures. Photo by Vickie Carpenter

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Children invited to write to Santa

Brittney Lofthouse
Contributing Writer

Safe Kids Macon County and the Macon County Sheriff's Office have been specially requested by Santa himself to help out this Christmas. Santa delivered a big red mailbox to the Macon County Sheriff's Office that will allow kids to write a letter directly to Santa.

"We know that this year has been really hard on everyone and that things are going to be different this holiday season, so we wanted to do a little something to help spread some holiday magic to families in our community," said Sheriff Robert Holland. "Make sure that you include a return address, so Santa can send a personalized letter back to your child."

With Safe Kids Macon County and the Macon County Sheriff's Office acting as Santa's elves, every boy and girl who writes a letter to Santa and drops it in Santa's mailbox located inside the lobby of the Macon County Detention Center, will get a special personalized letter back from Santa himself. "Safe Kids Macon County usually spends



(L-R) Det. Dani Burrows, Det. Amber Wright, Lt. Dereck Jones and Sheriff Robert Holland.

the year making sure children in our community are safe through things like car seat checking stations and fire prevention," said Safe Kids Macon County Coordinator Nick Lofthouse. "We were not able to do those things this year... so we wanted to do something to make sure we stay involved and active in our community."

The mailbox will be located inside the Macon County Detention Center lobby until Dec. 11. For those unable to drop off a letter in person, letters can be addressed to Santa and sent to 1820 Lakeside Drive, Franklin NC 28734.

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Smoky Center to host Cartoogechaye Baptist's Live Nativity

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Cartoogechaye Baptist Church's past biennial live nativity presentations have drawn such significant crowds that cars have been lined up from its quaint, creek-side location on West Old Murphy Road to Hwy. 64. Months of preparation are required every two years to adjust and build detailed sets, sew costumes, plan for the delivery of animals, and practice parts – all to convey an authentic depiction of Christ's birth more than 2,000 years ago.

Like most everything in 2020, this year's scheduled presentation was up in the air when Scotty Corbin, general manager/artistic director of Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, "approached us about having it outside at their facility," said Tim Brackett, a deacon at Cartoogechaye Baptist and a main organizer of the live nativity. "They cannot have any large inside performances, and they thought having the live nativity there would expose it to more people."

Said Corbin, "Since we are not able to open fully, we are planning a Christmas light show out in front of the venue, so I contacted [Cartoogechaye Baptist] because I thought the live nativity could be in the back. I think the traffic flow will be



Every couple of years, Cartoogechaye Baptist Church has presented a Living Nativity to bring the story of Christ's birth to life and show the true meaning of Christmas.

good – and the audience expanded. We are reconstructing the entire thing at the Center, but it's still [Cartoogechaye Baptist Church's] presentation put on by their church volunteers."

The nativity scenes include live animals to represent those that might have been already in Bethlehem or brought to Christ's birth site by travelers, such as the "wise men." Elaborate and realistic cos-

tumes adorn volunteers posing as Roman soldiers, villagers, and shepherds. The sensory experience is intended to give participants a glimpse of that historic day.

Brackett explained that it takes dozens of volunteers to prepare for the live nativity presentations, and about 50 people "perform" or "pitch in" on the nights of the actual presentations.

"Each year we add things, sometimes they are minor, sometimes major. But of course the story can't be changed. It's a big undertaking for such a small church, but it's worth it to create this experience of Bethlehem. We hope people will forget about the world for a few moments and focus on Jesus."

A few weeks ago, Brackett and other volunteers loaded all sets, props, and costumes from the church's storage units and took them to the Center. The live nativity is scheduled for Dec. 11-13, from 6-9 p.m. However, Smoky Mountain Center's light show and periodic live music will start Tuesday, Nov. 24 and run through New Year's. Attendees can tune into a radio frequency to listen to music in their cars on nights when there is live music and to listen to the Christmas story while driving through the live nativity.

There is no cost for these holiday

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Members of Cartoogechaye Baptist Church don costumes and other props to depict provide a drive through Bethlehem experience for visitors.

presentations, but Corbin said donations will be appreciated to offset expenses since COVID-19 has kept most shows from taking place this year.

“We can at least try to have some experiences ... aspects of holiday festivities,” said Corbin. “It will be safe because it’s outside and drive through. We all need hope throughout the season ... some good to focus on.”

Added Brackett: “Things might be upside down right now but it’s still Christmas, no matter what’s happening in the

world. Christmas won’t be cancelled and it can still be safe.”

An additional holiday experience at Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts is a “small audience dinner with some entertainers on stage,” said Corbin. A Christmas with Family and Friends is offered Dec. 7-8 and 14-15, starting at 6:30 p.m. “It’s a traditional Christmas dinner with live entertainment, but anyone interested needs to make reservations early because of our limited space restrictions,” said Corbin.

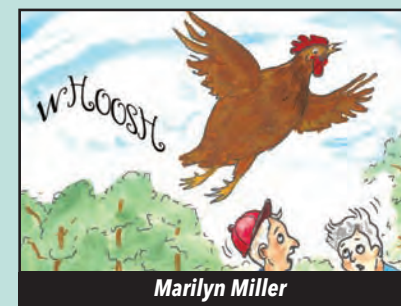
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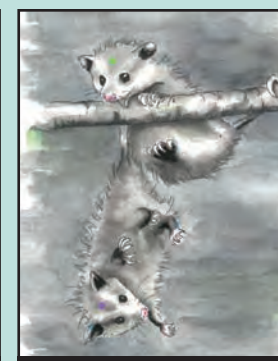
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Saturday, November 28th

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Prentiss Church's Buy A Tree Change a Life in its fifth year

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

For the last four years, a Prentiss Church-initiated Christmas tree sales fundraiser for Buy a Tree Change a Life has generated funds that help children globally and locally. The fundraiser continues this year, with trees for sale at Crabtree General Store in Franklin from the day after Thanksgiving, Nov. 27, until the lot is empty.

Buy a Tree Save a Life is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2012. The organization nationally has raised close to \$3 million since its founding in 2012, and more than \$700,000 last year.

Prentiss Church Pastor Kevin D. Chapman said, "The split of profits has always been 85% global [ministries] and 15% for local outreach. In 2020, due to the pandemic and local challenges communities face around the USA, the split of funds will be 50% global outreach and 50% local outreach, meaning 50% of all funds [raised in Macon County] stay in Macon County to help children locally."

The global outreach portion of the campaign supports mission teams in Cambodia that promote life skills and teaches trades to encourage self-sufficiency and economic stability as well as share the gospel.

In 2019, Prentiss Church presented a



Prentiss Church Pastor Kevin D. Chapman and Rev. Don Moffitt, former pastor of Prentiss Church, last year presented a check to Buy a Tree Change a Life global outreach for \$18,801.01. Proceeds of \$3,317.83 are going toward South Macon Elementary School projects.

check to Buy a Tree Change a Life Global Outreach for \$18,801.01. Proceeds of \$3,317.83 are going to fund ongoing projects at South Macon Elementary School.

"Over the last three years, we've provided

approximately 300 backpacks yearly filled with school supplies to children and teens," said Chapman. This year's pandemic hindered the backpack giveaway since schedules were uncertain and distribution logistically impossible.

The target goal for this year's local Buy a Tree Change a Life Christmas tree sales is \$25,000. Fresh Fraser firs of varying sizes will be purchased. Funds raised this Thanksgiving will purchase adaptive playground equipment for South Macon Elementary School children with special needs.

"The adaptive playground equipment will offer multi-sensory play opportunities, easier transitions on and off the equipment, and quiet spaces for children with autism," said Chapman, adding that prayer, discussions with the church council, and input from South Macon Elementary School Principal Allison Guynn settled the need for the playground equipment and the decision to use Buy a Tree Change a Life to help with that need.

"She [Guynn] was ecstatic," said Chapman.

He explained that annual success for the Buy a Tree Save a Life effort depends on community and business support.

"Year after year, our community and sponsors amaze me with generosity."

Chapman added, "I know this has been a challenging year for the beautiful people of Macon County. I see the pandemic continuing to linger. I am praying for you. Those who have suffered job loss and

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even tragically watched family and friends suffer from COVID-19, you are in my prayers. In considering the teachings of Jesus Christ, as well as the beloved Apostle Paul, it brings me to this conclusion regarding what we can do for one another while in the pandemic: let us consider these words of the Apostle, 'Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.' (Philippians 2:4)

Because of the pandemic Chapman pointed out the nuances to this year's Buy a Tree Save a Life.

"We will need everyone's help this year to make our tree lot successful and remain



Volunteer Randy Stoudemire inspects the trees before helping to load them on the truck for transport. The Buy A Tree Change a Life campaign's mission is "Helping children globally and locally."

safe. We ask if you have symptoms or have been in contact with those who have COVID-19 to please refrain from coming to the tree lot but instead contact us at the Prentiss Church Facebook page or call us at (828) 369-3885. We can arrange a touch-free delivery, based upon tree availability and

our limited tree quantities."

Why does Prentiss Church continue to sell Christmas trees year after year? "So that we can impact generations to come at Takam Village in Cambodia," said Chapman.

In recent weeks Cambodia has experienced devastating flooding due to monsoon-type rains with villagers experiencing hardship, lost rice crops and washed out roads and houses.

This update from the Cambodian country director based in Takam Village Isaac Lutz, "Yesterday we finally got a break in the weather and today we distributed food to 160 families from two of the villages we work in. We came together, prayed together, worshiped together and shared the good news with several families that have never heard it before. Then we shared food that will help families get through the next month.

"I'm incredibly proud of our team for their hard work and compassion. I'm also thankful for so many incredible individuals and churches from the U.S. whose generosity made this possible. There are still tons of needs and we will continue to respond and help as much as

we can, but I wanted to stop and celebrate a great start and a really special day. Thank you all who served and all who gave! I'm excited to continue serving our community. ... I love seeing the work impacting multiple generations," said Lutz.

In recent years members from Prentiss have traveled to Cambodia to see the difference the village is making in the community. Prentiss has provided desks for the school, helped build a library and a fish pond, donated soccer cleats to the children and more.



Cambodian country director Isaac Lutz supervises the distribution of food and supplies in Takam Village. Funds from Buy a Tree Change a Life supports such efforts.



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Christmas Calendar of Events

FRANKLIN

November 26

Community Thanksgiving Meal, 12 noon to 2 p.m., will be offered as takeout meals in a curbside pickup in front of the First Presbyterian Church, 26 Church St. No dine-in service, beverages or utensils. Cars should enter Church Street from Iotla Street and exit onto Harrison Avenue. Reservations not required.



Cold Turkey 5K & Little Turkeys Fun Run (all ages). Race day registration begins at 8 a.m. or sign up at RunSignup; Little Turkeys Fun Run Walk begins at 9 a.m.; Cold Turkey 5K begins at 9:30 a.m. Tasee Shelter, 877 Ulco Drive, Franklin.

November 28

Small Business Saturday was created to encourage people to shop at small, independent businesses. The idea was to encourage people to take a break from the usual chain stores and support the local businesses that support their communities throughout the year.



Winter Wonderland in downtown Franklin, 5 to 8 p.m. Tree Lighting at 7 p.m. Roving Santa, living window displays, merchants open late, holiday photo opp displays.

November 29

Christmas "Drive-Up" Celebration in downtown Franklin. Emergency personnel, law enforcement, educators and other essential workers will serve as this year's grand marshals. Procession will begin at Town Hall, turn left onto Porter Street, then left on Palmer Street and proceed to Highlands Road, ending at the flea market. For more information, contact the Franklin Chamber of Commerce at (828)524-3161.

December 5

Winter Wonderland in downtown Franklin, 5 to 8 p.m. Roving Santa, living window displays, merchants open late, holiday photo opp displays.

December 7, 8, 14, 15

A Christmas With Family and Friends Dinner Show, An Evening of Stories Songs and Traditions. Join us as we honor the season with songs, stories and traditions in this one-of-a-kind dinner show served live on stage. The menu includes a traditional holiday feast of turkey, stuffing and all the trimmings. Tables will be available for parties of four to allow for appropriate social distancing. Mask will be required until seated. Advanced reservations are suggested

due to the extreme limit of seating available. Dinner seating will begin at 6:15 p.m. each



evening. Let's come together with family and friends for a classic Christmas celebration. Presented by the Overlook Theatre Company. Visit greatmountainmusic.com for ticket information.

December 11, 12, 13

The Bethlehem Experience: A Live Drive-Thru Nativity at 6 p.m. nightly. Begin your journey at the main entrance of Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts where the front of the venue will be decked out in thousands of twinkling lights dancing to the traditional sounds of the season. Then, passing through the gates of ancient

BLACK FRIDAY ALL WEEKEND

November 28th - 30th

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times, visit the scenes of the shepherds in the fields, the traveling wise men and the manger surrounded by the Heavenly Hosts proclaiming "Glory to God in the Highest!" This seasonal event, presented by Cartoogechaye Baptist Church, is a heart-warming celebration of the birth of Christ and the true meaning of Christmas. This event is free, but donations will be accepted.

December 20

Christmas with the Isaacs, 3 p.m. Celebrate the traditional and sacred sounds of the Christmas Season, from their family to yours. For ticket information, visit greatmountain-music.com.

HIGHLANDS/ CASHIERS

November 26

Gobble on the Green Thanksgiving Day 5K and Fun Run. Registration and details are available on www.villagegreencashiersnc.com or follow @cashiersgreen on social media.



November 27

Visit with Santa from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Village Green. Enjoy photo opportunities with family, friends, and neighbors as well as s' mores, holiday festivities and more.

November 27, 28 & 29

Cashiers Historical Society presents Christmas at Col. John's Cabin. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily. Visit the 1840's cabin for a little bit of Christmas cheer. Visitors are invited to read a Christmas story by the fireplace, make a craft or two, sip hot chocolate, and eat Christmas cookies and other sweets. No charge for admission; donations are accepted. Call (828)742-7710 for information.

November 27-28

Mistletoe Market 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at the Village Green. A collection of artists and events for holiday shopping and fun.

Annual Cashiers Christmas Tree Lighting at 6 p.m.

November 28- January 1

Santa Hut, Sleigh and mailbox in Kelsey Hutchinson Park. Bring your letters to Santa and cameras for a photo op.

November 28

Trim Our Town. Christmas Stroll, Shopping 10 a.m. Light Up the Park. Lights on at 6 p.m. Facebook Live pro-



grams on WHLC. Santa's Arrival. Watch for the firetruck coming through town. Ice skating - call for reservation. Drive up Christmas movie "Elf" showing at the Performing Arts Center.

December 5

Christmas Stroll, shopping 10 a.m. in Highlands. Olde Mountain Christmas Drive through Festival 6 to 8:30 p.m. Floats, antique cars, Homecoming Court and more. Music by Curtis Blackwell Band, Dean English Band and Bagpipers. See Santa on the firetruck at Kelsey Hutchinson Park. Elves will have candy canes for the young and the young at heart. Pinnacle Brass Ensemble on the Park stage. Downtown Highlands.

JACKSON COUNTY

November 28-December 24

Home for the Holidays begins with Small Business Saturday. Holiday Music downtown Sylva 12:30-4:30 p.m. on Friday nights. Official Town of Sylva Christmas tree will be decorated and lit throughout the season at the fountain in front of the historic courthouse. Bridge Park Pavilion will also be lit along with a few lighted Christmas trees in the pavilion to add to the holiday spirit. Holiday Window Decorating Contest. For more information, please contact the Main Street Sylva Team at (828)586-2155 or e-mail MainStreetSylvaTeam@gmail.com.

Sunday, December 4-5, 11 & 12

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Annual Cowee Christmas cancelled; Balsam Bee carries on

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

For several weeks, volunteers have been at work designing the artwork, cutting out screened printed fabric squares, sewing, and stuffing pillows for the third annual Balsam Bee community fundraiser for



Fragrant trimmings from local Fraser fir and Northern Adirondack balsam pine trees is stuffing for handcrafted pillows and sachets sold to benefit Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center.

Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center. Although the almost year-long pandemic has shuttered many holiday events, including the all-day Cowee Christmas activities, the fundraising aspect of Balsam Bee is in motion.

Balsam Bee organizer Claire Suminski, her family, and other community volunteers, established Balsam Bee three years ago as a way to bring the community together for an old fashioned activity involving music, craft making, sales, and – most importantly – the stuffing, sewing, and selling of sachets and pillows with fragrant local Fraser fir and Northern Adirondack balsam pine tree trimmings.

This year, because a gathering is deemed unsafe due to COVID-19, the sewing and stuffing of at least 100 small and large pillows and multiple sachets was accomplished by individual volunteers at their homes. These items will be for sale at a table in front of Books Unlimited during the Franklin's Winter Wonderland event Nov. 28 and Dec. 5 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. All proceeds from the sales will go to Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center.

"Dennis Dietz, a local artist, has provided a beautiful bear design for us for this year," said Suminski. "He is a true mountain heritage artist who draws what he sees. And Gooder Grafix printed three different



Local artist Dennis Dietz provided a bear design as one of the Balsam Bee stuffed pillow designs, and Gooder Grafix printed it and two other designs on muslin fabric, which was then sewn into pillows.

designs for us on muslin fabric. Greta Hurst cut the squares, and then pressed, surged, and sewed the edges, and then volunteers were involved with filling the pillows with balsam. The pillows were then sewn closed with a seam label inserted: The Balsam Bee at Cowee."

Suminski said cancelling the full 2020 Balsam Bee, which has drawn numerous people for the food, fellowship, and volunteerism, was a difficult decision this year. "I did not want to cancel it, but I know we needed to be sensitive to the

safety requirements of the state. Cowee School can't sanction something like that right now. But we are keeping the heart of Balsam Bee by at least offering the items filled with wonderful smelling balsam. We plan to be back on track next Christmas."

Suminski suggested: "Purchasing these pillows helps the school, and they are wonderful to give as gifts because they come from nature, hearts, and hands." Anyone interested in more information about Balsam Bee, or to place an order for a pillow can contact Claire Suminski

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Serving children and families is community effort during holidays

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Annually, various Macon County organizations, churches, and individuals step up to provide not only gifts to underprivileged children but also other resources for needy individuals and families.

Shop With a Cop

Last year, Macon County law enforcement officers, fire fighters, first responders, and other public safety representatives paired with approximately 200 at-risk children and took them shopping during the holidays for the Shop with a Cop (SWAC) program, established locally 25 years ago by Macon County Sheriff Robbie Holland and his wife, Marci.

“We started off with three girls whose mother was sent to prison for child abuse,” said Sheriff Holland. “We decided to do it full-bore the next year.”

Highlands Police Chief Andrea Holland has helped with SWAC for 16 years, and some children assisted by the program years ago are now law enforcement officers currently volunteering for SWAC.

Children ranging from 5 to 16 years old are recommended for SWAC most often by teachers, law enforcement offices, and community members. Applications for



Local law enforcement personnel sometimes get their families involved in the giving as is the case with School Resource Officer Scott Nelson and his son Garrett (left). Part of the Shop with a Cop experience is to provide a meal to the children. Deputy Eddie Crawford and Biltmore Church Campus Kids' Associate Paula Millsaps Gentry took children to Motor Company Grill (right).



each child must be filled out this year by Dec. 10.

“We try to take care of children we haven't taken care of in the past,” said Sheriff Holland. “And it's grown so big over the years.”

Volunteers are paired with a child to shop using a \$100 donated gift card and volunteers guide the child to find items for themselves and a family member. The

child is also taken out for a meal, is assisted with wrapping presents, and receives a winter coat.

SWAC partners with Wal-Mart and is supported by Rotary Club of Highlands and many local businesses and restaurants, according to Sheriff Holland. “Motor Co. Grill has always been a huge supporter to provide meals not only for the children but also to the people taking the children

shopping.” And Sheriff Holland explained that Rotary Club of Highlands' long-time support has meant all children referred for SWAC are funded.

“This program is 100% community-funded, with no tax dollars used,” said Sheriff Holland, “and we appreciate anything donated. It all helps. We've even had donations of \$1. It all goes toward

See page 14

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SERVING

From previous page

making the holidays better for some children.”

Sheriff Holland pointed out that the impact SWAC has on children and families goes beyond holiday shopping. “It gives them an opportunity to see us in a different situation,” he said. “Often children and families are only exposed to officers, first responders ... during a traumatic event. It’s interesting the long-term relationships that have been built because of Shop With a Cop. We’ve seen some of these kids get through high school, college, and go onto become law enforcement officers themselves who end up helping with Shop with a Cop.”

Due to tensions and riots in other parts of the country, Sheriff Holland indicated that programs such as SWAC are “very important right now.” He added, “We’re blessed in our community. We have not seen an uprising against law enforcement. I think the majority of the people support us and what we do in this community.”

Although the “ever-changing” COVID-19’s safety precautions may alter SWAC’s specific shopping plans, Sheriff Holland said they are on track to “help as many families as possible” and to get all shopping completed before Christmas.

MPP’s Holiday Angels

Macon Program for Progress (MPP) is a

community collaborative effort with the intention to improve quality of life for individuals, children, and families. Its Holiday Angels initiative started around 1990 as an “emergency assistance program” with an objective to reach individuals and families in need during the Christmas holidays. Last year, according to Felicia Roberts, family and community outreach specialist, 248 children, 171 families, and 66 elderly and special needs individuals were served by Holiday Angels. The effort pairs sponsors – made up of individuals, churches, businesses, etc. – with qualified applicants and provides food, firewood, clothing, toys, and more.

Roberts shared that Holiday Angels is “self-supporting and operates solely with donations and sponsors. All monetary donations, toys, and other donations go directly to needy families.”

Annually, applications for Holiday Angels’ volunteer sponsors and gift recipients are taken during the month of November through Dec. 1. Then, after volunteer sponsors and gift recipients are matched, volunteer sponsors can either wrap and deliver items to their matched family or individual or they can drop the gifts off at MPP offices, located at 82 East Orchard View Lane in



Discover Church I Love My Town Christmas provides opportunities to purchase gifts for needy children locally as well as support efforts in Haiti and Honduras.

Franklin.

Gift recipient applicants are required to prove income for the last six months, and MPP adheres to federal 2020 poverty guidelines. Gift recipient applicants can convey general needs, clothing sizes, children’s ages, interests, and more. Children’s toy gifts are for ages 0-12. Gift recipient applicants are encouraged not to “double dip,” according to Roberts, who explained that MPP interacts with other holiday gifting programs to learn if applicants are also asking for help and items from more than one organization.

“This year we’re getting a lot of new sponsors, but we always have a lot of repeat sponsors,” said Roberts. “Every year we try to change up the sponsors and their matched

individuals or families. Some sponsors request to help individuals or families in their neighborhoods or in a specific area of the Macon County. A lot of people in our community count on the Holiday Angels program.”

For more details about Holiday Angels, or to donate, sponsor or apply, contact MPP at (828) 524-4471.

Smoky Mountain Toys for Tots

In 2019, Smoky Mountain Toys for Tots distributed more than 2,400 toys in Macon, Jackson, Haywood, Swain counties in North Carolina and in Rabun County in Georgia. This summer the organization lost its space at Holly Springs Plaza at U.S. 441 Bypass in Franklin due to Ingles Market’s plans to renovate the shopping center. Smoky Mountain Toys for Tots’ current 800-square-foot location is where coordinator Randy Hughes and his team of around 20 volunteers will attempt this holiday season to distribute toys to underprivileged children.

“It’s tight,” said Hughes, who explained that the local arm of the national 1947-founded Toys for Tots program has grown significantly in recent years. “A few years ago we were serving around 500 children, and now we are serving more than 2,000. We could use about 2,000 square feet of space to house Smoky Mountain Toys for Tots, the toys, and the volunteer workers, but we will do the best we can this year with what we have to work with. Somehow we will get the toys distributed.”

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Besides providing Christmas presents to underserved children, Smoky Mountain Toys for Tots also replenishes toys lost in fires and natural disasters as well as donates books.

Interested volunteers and donors can visit smokymt.toysfortots.org to learn more. Toys can also be dropped at the new location at 2142 Georgia Road.

I Love My Town Christmas

Annually, Discover Church hosts I Love My Town Christmas, which is a multifaceted community-wide effort that benefits not only children and families in Western North Carolina but in Haiti and Honduras as well.

Numerous Christmas trees are decorated in the Discover Church sanctuary and each represents a theme. This year, ornament tags on the trees feature specific needs for 200-plus foster children in Macon, Jackson, and Swain counties, several children designated as at-risk by Macon County Program for Progress, and around 30 Angel Tree children whose parent or parents are incarcerated.

Other trees are focused on raising funds to support children and families in Haiti and Honduras. Tags on trees indicate donation needs to help these countries purchase food, clothing, medicines, and more, and monies to assist with ongoing projects such



as cistern construction and home repairs.

This year, I Love My Town Christmas kicks off on Dec. 6 during the three service times of 8:30, 10, and 11; yet, instead of just occurring for one day, it will take place all week. The church will be open throughout the week for visitors to view the themed trees and pick up tags; or the discover.church website and its Facebook page provides contact information for anyone wanting to make an appointment to view the trees.

Gifts and monetary donations can be dropped off at the church, located at 47 Macon Center Drive in Franklin, at any time from Sunday, Dec. 6 until Friday, Dec. 11. Monetary donations to support any of the I Love My Town Christmas campaigns can be made online as well. On Saturday, Dec. 12, volunteers will organize all donated gifts, shop for children whose tags did not get selected, and ready the gifts for distribution.

Besides the opportunities to support children and families in Western North Carolina and Haiti and Honduras, I Love My Town Christmas 2020 is hosting a breakfast for Macon County law enforcement officers, fire fighters, and first responders as well as a breakfast for all Macon County teachers and faculty. Plus, volunteers will tackle a painting project at Trimont Christian Academy.

Smoky Center to host Cartoogechaye Baptist's Live Nativity

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

Cartoogechaye Baptist Church's past biennial live nativity presentations have drawn such significant crowds that cars have been lined up from its quaint, creek-side location on West Old Murphy Road to Hwy. 64. Months of preparation are required every two years to adjust and build detailed sets, sew costumes, plan for the delivery of animals, and practice parts – all to convey an authentic depiction of Christ's birth more than 2,000 years ago.

Like most everything in 2020, this year's scheduled presentation was up in the air when Scotty Corbin, general manager/artistic director of Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts, "approached us about having it outside at their facility," said Tim Brackett, a deacon at Cartoogechaye Baptist and a main organizer of the live nativity. "They cannot have any large inside performances, and they thought having the live nativity there would expose it to more people."

Said Corbin, "Since we are not able to open fully, we are planning a Christmas light show out in front of the venue, so I contacted [Cartoogechaye Baptist] because I thought the live nativity could be in the back. I think the traffic flow will be



Every couple of years, Cartoogechaye Baptist Church has presented a Living Nativity to bring the story of Christ's birth to life and show the true meaning of Christmas.

good – and the audience expanded. We are reconstructing the entire thing at the Center, but it's still [Cartoogechaye Baptist Church's] presentation put on by their church volunteers."

The nativity scenes include live animals to represent those that might have been already in Bethlehem or brought to Christ's birth site by travelers, such as the "wise men." Elaborate and realistic cos-

tumes adorn volunteers posing as Roman soldiers, villagers, and shepherds. The sensory experience is intended to give participants a glimpse of that historic day.

Brackett explained that it takes dozens of volunteers to prepare for the live nativity presentations, and about 50 people "perform" or "pitch in" on the nights of the actual presentations.

"Each year we add things, sometimes they are minor, sometimes major. But of course the story can't be changed. It's a big undertaking for such a small church, but it's worth it to create this experience of Bethlehem. We hope people will forget about the world for a few moments and focus on Jesus."

A few weeks ago, Brackett and other volunteers loaded all sets, props, and costumes from the church's storage units and took them to the Center. The live nativity is scheduled for Dec. 11-13, from 6-9 p.m. However, Smoky Mountain Center's light show and periodic live music will start Tuesday, Nov. 24 and run through New Year's. Attendees can tune into a radio frequency to listen to music in their cars on nights when there is live music and to listen to the Christmas story while driving through the live nativity.

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Suminski is not the author of "Animal Stories," per se, but the "collector." She opened the door for every age, from young people to senior citizens, to share about their experiences with animals.

"For seniors, especially, it has been good for them to share stories, and to look forward to reading these books," said Suminski. "The books really appeal to grade school-aged children and seniors."

One of the stories in "Animal Stories 2" was contributed by a Grandview Manor Care Center resident, Martha Lind, about screech owls. Marilyn Miller, a resident at Franklin House, contributed the illustration for Lind's story.

"Martha's story is wonderful," said Suminski, "and Marilyn is a marvelous artist. Marilyn also contributed and illustrated the second story in the second book called 'The Short Stubborn Life of Hen-Rietta.' Seniors, especially during this isolating time of COVID-19, benefit from knowing they still can make contributions and have purpose. These books provide a platform to share."

The second "Animal Stories" book, in a series of eight, will be available Nov. 28 and Dec. 5, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., in the store and in front of Books Unlimited in downtown Franklin as part of

holiday festivities. All Suminski Family Books are sold online at www.suminski-familybooks.com and at retail stores and other locations, such as the Smoky Mountain Visitors Center, throughout Macon



Franklin House resident Marilyn Miller contributed both the story and the illustration for "The Short Stubborn Life of Hen-Rietta," in the second Animal Stories book.

County. The other Animal Stories books in the series will be released throughout next year and subsequent years as they are completed.

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Gardening gifts provide years of enjoyment

Melinda Myers – Columnist

The popularity of gardening is at an all-time high and people are discovering its many benefits. Some want to grow safe and nutritious food, others are boosting the beauty of their landscape, and many are turning to gardening to relieve stress. With the holidays right around the corner, it's the perfect opportunity to support new and experienced gardeners with a thoughtful garden-related gift.

Help small space gardeners expand their growing space and reduce maintenance with self-watering elevated cedar planters. Elevated gardens add garden space to a balcony, deck or patio while raising the garden bed to a comfortable and easily accessible height. The self-watering system makes gardening easy with proper, less frequent watering to ensure success.

Do the same for indoor plant enthusiasts with stylish terrariums, plant stands, and lighting features. Terrariums are still popular, creating a decorative means for providing the moisture and humidity tropical plants need. Copper and rot resistant mango wood terrariums (gardeners.com) add a new and decorative twist to this traditional

growing system.

Plant stands allow your favorite indoor gardener to maximize any available space. Shelves filled with greenery help improve indoor air quality, reduce stress, and can elevate one's mood. New modern metal plant stand designs add a modern vibe to the indoor garden display.

When space is at a premium, give the gift of vertical gardening accessories. Birdcage planters provide a unique way to display tropical or seasonal flowers. Lower them to tabletop level to use as a centerpiece or decorative element in seasonal indoor displays.

Don't overlook the cooks in your life that may be intrigued by moving their garden indoors. Keep them stocked with fresh herbs and vegetables. Increase their growing space and needed light with a gift of energy efficient LED grow lights in an attractive stand. For those with very limited space, consider an organic kitchen caddy planter kit. A windowsill or countertop herb garden is a great way for anyone to add garden-fresh flavor to winter meals.

Make gardening a fun and accessible experience with the help of a deep seat kneeler that when flipped over, con-

verts. Or add storage and mobility with a tractor scoot with a bucket basket. The handle allows you to easily take your tools and garden scoot with you to every corner of your landscape.

And don't forget the stocking stuffers. Who doesn't need extra plant tags, ties and gloves? Consider a flexible lightweight tub that is perfect for harvesting garden produce, collecting weeds or transporting anything from one space to another.

The gift of gardening provides lifelong benefits. Supporting family and friends with useful tools and equipment can increase their gardening enjoyment and success. And don't forget to add a few of your favorite garden related items to your gift list. You'll eliminate the stress and guesswork for the giver and you both will appreciate a gift that provides years of function, beauty and memories.

Melinda Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV & radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and is commissioned for her expertise to write this article. Her web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.



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Studio open by appointment this year

Deena C. Bouknight
Contributing Writer

On the grounds of his Lower Burningtown home is a large shed that Doug Hubbs converted years ago from his daughters' playhouse to his gallery/warehouse space. The local potter believes he has at least 1,000 pieces – everything from plates and cups to Turkish cookware and teapots – displayed on those shelves. His pieces are finished employing a range of firing techniques from raku to bisque to fumed to low- or high-reduction stoneware. Some pieces are also pit-fired. He also has a collection of “friendly” face jugs.

Annually, Doug and his wife, Patti, host a large-scale holiday event to bring local residents and visitors together through food and fellowship and opportunities to peruse and purchase the Cave Creek Pottery.



Doug Hubbs has a collection of “friendly” face jugs at his studio, open - by appointment this year Nov. 29-Dec. 12.

Since the only certainty for 2020 is uncertainty, the Hubbs decided that instead of offering up their one-day event at the beginning of December, they would enable people to make private reservations from Nov. 29 to Dec. 12. Safety, due to the pandemic, is the obvious reason for this year's change. Guests will still be offered refreshments, although not the spread of food and drinks that have signified the event in the past, and they will have an opportunity to enjoy the wedding-worthy mountain venue and take their time shopping the vast pottery collection.

To make an appointment for this holiday's Show and Sell, call (828)524-2611.





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