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FAYETTE COUNTY COMMUNITIES CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN STYLE

Uniontown, PA – Communities throughout Fayette County are doing their best to make the Christmas season special.

Uniontown's Christmas in the Square has been ongoing weekly since its inaugural day Nov. 27 in the city's Storey Square. Visits from Santa, story time with Mrs. Claus and free hot chocolate have been just a few of the things residents look forward to at the free event.

Downtown Business District Authority President Lauren Yohman, who helped to organize the event along with Matt George of the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Uniontown, said though the two organizations led the event, it really is something that was pulled together by all of the local businesses, churches and other organizations who have participated. State Farm interns from Laurel Highlands and Uniontown high schools also have played a big role in the planning, and students from the Career Technical Institute built the giant light-up presents in the park.

"They're doing it because they're giving back to the community," she said of the participants.

And though Dec. 11's events were canceled due to windy weather, residents still have one more chance to get out and have some fun walking through the square this Saturday, beginning at 4 p.m.

"Kids can do crafts, such as reindeer food. I think someone is making reindeer ears," Yohman said, mentioning snow globes as another Christmas-themed craft.

Music has been featured each week, and Yohman said Albert Gallatin student Kaelyn Rozgony and others have "jumped on the mic and sang." She noted the Grinch and Olaf have been in attendance and are scheduled to be on hand this Saturday as well.

In past weeks, Rizz's has provided interactive events, making s'mores and hot dogs with children, and DiMarco's has roasted chestnuts on an open fire, as the carol goes. This week, Sullivan Bros. will provide specialty hot drinks, and Goodie Girls will bring baked goods.

Yohman said past weeks have been well-attended, and despite some rain in the forecast, she hopes the final Saturday will be the same.

"I have high hopes. There's a lot going on. The Nutcracker is playing two shows, so there should be people out," she said. "They just need to bring their umbrellas."

Brownsville Borough kicked off the season just after Thanksgiving, holding its annual light-up night on Nov. 26. The event included a parade and visits from Santa and Mrs. Claus, as well as other familiar characters.

“Mickey (Mouse) was here, and Olaf,” council President Tracy Zivkovich said. “Each of the different fire companies added lights and things that swirled to their trucks. They made (the parade) very, very colorful.”

The parade, she said, didn’t stick just to one main street, but rather wound through the borough, being sure to pass by locations such as senior living facilities, where firefighters knew it was difficult for residents to actually get out to see a parade.

Zivkovich said borough firefighters and volunteers also lined the streets with more than 1,000 luminaries. She said the luminaries even lit streets that aren’t on the parade route, thanks to neighborhood members who take it upon themselves to set them up.

Following the parade, Santa Claus visited with children on the stage in the borough’s downtown area, where a concert had just finished playing. A stuff-a-bus event also was held, and Zivkovich said the area “was filled with people.”

“Light-Up Night has always been very popular, and it’s exciting to see it get expanded,” she said.

Zivkovich credited Brownsville Mayor Ross Swords with being “able to bring a lot of excitement to the community” and said the event couldn’t be done if it weren’t for the fire companies. She said everyone came together to pull off an event borough residents seemed to enjoy.

“Everyone was in a festive mood,” she said.

In Masontown, nonprofit group Masontown Matters organized some holiday fun, with the support of the borough.

Council member Michele Berry, who also is a member of Masontown Matters, said the group organized a Santa on the Square event on Dec. 12 in the borough parking lot.

“Santa came, and we had cookies, and there was hot cocoa for anyone who came,” she said.

The group also oversaw the lighting of the Christmas tree, and the free event included a band and children’s activities.

“We don’t know how many people came, but we know we went over 200 cups (of cocoa),” Berry said.

After the festivities, group members walked around downtown to judge entries in the business window decorating contest.

Among those visiting Masontown businesses throughout the holiday season has been Melvin the moose.

“Melvin on Main is our little moose,” Berry said. “He is somewhere every day, and you can go visit him.”

Berry said Melvin visits businesses for a day or two, during which time those businesses run promotions and specials.

There still is time to take part in yet another Masontown activity 0 the house decorating contest. Residents can sign up through Saturday at [masontownmatters@yahoo.com](mailto:masantownmatters@yahoo.com), and judging will take place on Sunday.

It hasn't been a typical Christmas in Connellsville, with no parade held and no "It's a Connellsville Christmas" event. But Mayor Greg Lincoln said there still were festive activities to be found around the city.

"The (Chamber of Commerce) had Christmas in the Park on Nov. 20. They brought that back," he said.

The event was held at Yough River Park and featured such activities as free carriage rides and visits with Santa.

"They went all-out for the community to offer something for everyone," Lincoln said, noting that nearly 500 treat bags were given on a perfect fall day. "That was a very fantastic day of everything that they put together for the community."

The following week, on Nov. 27, the city lit its Christmas tree, and on Dec. 4, a number of events were held around town by businesses and organizations. But Lincoln said next year, Connellsville is going to try to "regroup" and organize more city-sponsored events.

Communities throughout the county have really pulled together in making Fayette festive and spreading joy this holiday season.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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