

TRI★COUNTY REPORTER

THE NEWS OF AZLE, SPRINGTOWN, AND SURROUNDING AREAS

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION
THURSDAY, Nov. 16, 2023

Holiday GIFT GUIDE



2023



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Azle Area Chamber of Commerce

Parade of Lights

The Azle Area Chamber of Commerce Parade of Lights is at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 2. The parade will begin with the simultaneous lighting of the Christmas tree in front of the Azle Historical Museum, 124 W. Main St., and the Christmas tree in front of Azle City Hall, 505 W. Main St., at 6:30 p.m.

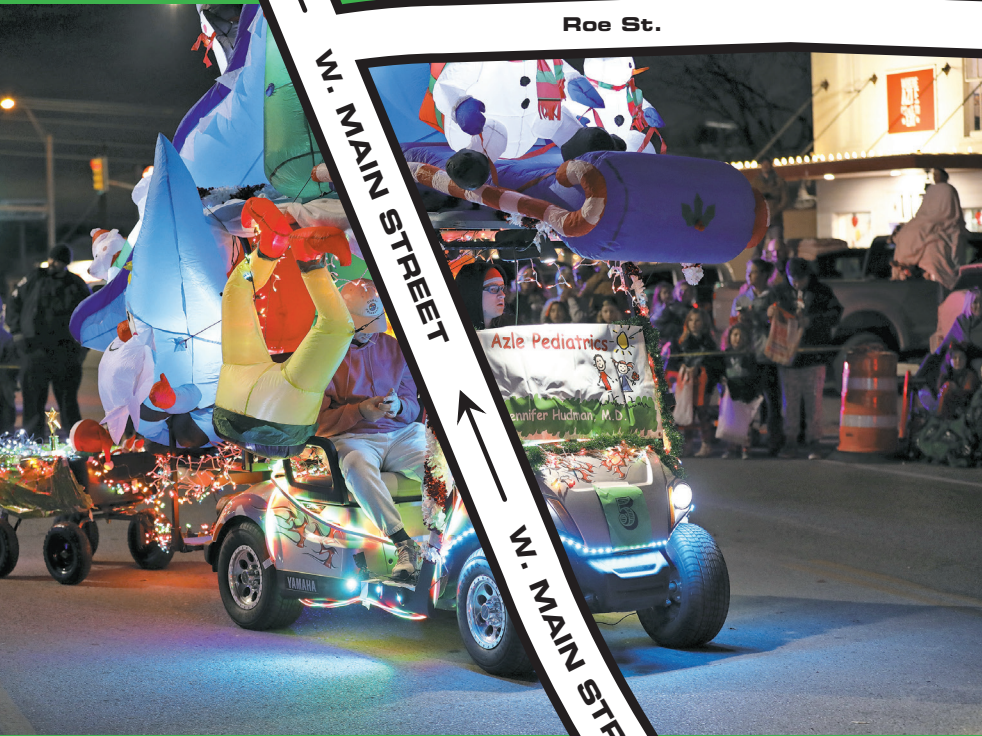
This year's parade theme is "Candyland Christmas."

Entries for the parade competition are open now through 4:30 pm on Dec. 2. Parade entries will be accepted the night of the parade but placement will not be guaranteed.

Register at www.azlechristmasonmain.com

Parade Entry Check-In @ 4:30 p.m. Judging happens BEFORE the parade so don't be late so your entry can be judged.

END



PARADE STAGING AREA FOR PARTICIPANTS

PARADE ROUTE

- The parade will begin at Church Street, traveling west on Main Street, turning right on Industrial Avenue, right on Central Dr.

PARADE RULES

- Staging is located in the FRONT of the Azle ISD Admin Building (300 Roe Street).
- Parade staging starts at 4:30 p.m. Make sure to arrive early enough for your entry to be judged.
- All judging takes place BEFORE the parade.
- Vehicle drivers must hold a valid driver's license and

- liability insurance and be at least 21 years old.
- Azle PD will be checking these documents during check-in.
- Participants must be 18 years or older to ride an ATV, go-cart, or any other recreational motorized vehicle.
- Vehicles must be large enough for all riders to remain seated, with all body parts inside the perimeter of the vehicle.
- Walking parade participants will be allowed to hand out candy or toys during the parade.
- Absolutely no candy or toys shall be thrown from

- parade vehicles. Violators will not be able to participate in next year's parade.
- All horse entries must provide Coggins Test papers, waste bags, or a way to pick up any animal waste.
- NO SANTA OR MRS. CLAUS entries, float riders, etc. We already have a Santa!
- Late arrivals will be placed at the end of the parade. No Exceptions.
- Vehicles are not permitted to stop during the parade route.
- ALL entries must have Christmas lights. This parade is at night and we want all to be seen.
- No off-loading of parade participants will be permitted along the parade route.
- The Azle Area Chamber of Commerce reserves the right to refuse any entry for any reason.

Parade begins with tree lighting, and ends with Santa's arrival
December 2, 6:30 - 7:00 p.m.

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Easy and Quick Elf on the Shelf Ideas

STAFF REPORTS

Whether this is your first Christmas introducing the Elf on the Shelf to your kids or the tenth, it can be a lot of work coming up with some fun mischief for your elf to get into. Here are some easy and quick ideas of what to do with your Elf on a Shelf when he or she arrives for the holidays:

- Spell out "I'm Back!" on the counter with candies like M&Ms or Hershey Kisses as a fun way to welcome your elf
- Grab some Christmas coloring books and a box of crayons and have your elf "color" the first page and let the kids do the rest; or have your kids alternate coloring pages with the elf each day
- If you don't mind a little mess, have the elf make a snow angel in some flour on the table along with a message written in the "snow"
- Have your elf challenge

the kids to a LEGO building contest

- Tape your elf to the wall with some blue painters' tape - you can even have Barbie or some other friends taped up there with him
- Stick the elf in a roll of toilet paper that he has managed to unravel across the floor or down the stairs
- Have your elf build a toilet paper snowman, or stack up some snowballs for a fight with the other toys
- Trap the elf under a glass with a note that says "Uh-oh, I've been caught!"
- If you have a front load washing machine, tape him up inside the door like he's been trapped in a load of laundry
- Let the elf go fishing for Goldfish crackers or Swedish Fish
- Hide 12 candy canes around the house and have the elf hold a sign telling them to find them all to get a special treat.

I brought you a snowman from the North Pole!

Materials:

- Clear jar
- Baby carrot
- Two rocks
- Water
- Optional: glycerin, buttons

Instructions:

Your Scout Elf will begin by filling a jar with water (Pro tip: Add glycerin to make snowman features float).

Then they will add the baby carrot, rocks and possibly some buttons to the jar.

Next, they will set it out for kids to find and get a good giggle!



Toy buying tips when shopping for kids



Toys that are loud, shoot objects into the air or contain small pieces pose a threat to children.

STAFF REPORTS

Shopping for gifts for kids makes many shoppers nostalgic for their own childhoods. Few adults can forget the joy of finding the perfect gift under the tree on Christmas morning. Recreating that magic for a youngster can be as joyous for gift givers as it is for kids. That's especially so when shoppers make it a point to give safe, age-appropriate gifts.

Whether shopping for their own children or their grandkids, nieces or nephews, shoppers can keep these tips in mind to ensure they give toys that are as safe as they are fun.

· Speak to Mom and Dad first. When buying for a grandchild, niece or nephew, shoppers should first ask Mom or Dad for suggestions. Parents will know which types of toys their children

like, and they'll also know the child's level of maturity. Some kids may not be mature enough to play with otherwise age-appropriate toys, while others may be mature beyond their years and enjoy more complex toys than their age would suggest. Parents will know what makes a good toy and what doesn't.

· Learn what to look for on labels. Toy labels are great sources of information, but shoppers must know what to look for. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that toy labels include information about age-appropriateness (i.e., 'Ages 3 & Up') as well as directions regarding how to use the toy. If the instructions seem a bit complex for the child the item will be for, look for something else. Children's toy labels also include additional information that consumers may not be fa-

miliar with. For example, toys labeled 'ASTM F963' meet the latest safety standards from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. An 'ASTM D4236' label indicates the materials associated with the art toy have been reviewed and deemed safe by a toxicologist. More information about toy label requirements can be found at cpsc.gov. The AAP advises that electric toys should only be given to kids if they include the UL label. That means the toy has been certified by the global safety certification company UL, LLC.

· Avoid certain features. The AAP notes that toys that are loud, shoot objects into the air or contain small pieces pose a threat to children. Especially loud toys can damage children's hearing, while projectiles can increase the risk of eye injuries or choking. Toys with small pieces

also pose a choking risk to young children who may try to put the pieces into their mouths.

· Err on the side of caution. Consumers who are uncertain about the safety of a given toy, even after reading its label, should err on the side of caution and only give toys they're confident won't pose a safety risk. Even toys that may seem safe could be dangerous to kids who might otherwise seem old enough. For example, the AAP advises against giving kids under 12 hobby kits and chemistry sets. That's because such kits may contain dangerous chemicals that even pre-adolescents are not old enough to handle safely.

Shoppers must consider a host of factors when looking for safe toys for kids this holiday season.

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Great gifts for the family foodie

STAFF REPORTS

Food features prominently throughout the holiday season. Family meals around the holiday dinner table are a cherished tradition in millions of households, and food also plays a central role during seasonal gatherings with friends and colleagues. Food also can feature prominently throughout Chanukah and on Christmas Day, particularly if a loved one qualifies as a full-fledged foodie.

Many families feature at least one foodie. Foodies always know the best place in town to grab a bite or when a trendy new restaurant will open its doors. But such individuals also enjoy making meals at home, and the following gift ideas can make this holiday season more flavorful for the family foodie.

• **Tabletop firepit:** Shoppers who want to impress their food-loving loved one with something truly unique can give a tabletop firepit. Safe for indoor

use, tabletop firepits enable s'mores-loving foodies to indulge in a traditionally summertime favorite all-year-round. Tabletop firepits are small enough to be stored on a kitchen countertop or in a cabinet. When in use, the s'mores-friendly accessory is smokeless, removing perhaps the lone disadvantage to making this beloved treat.

• **Club subscription:** Monthly subscriptions are a gift that can keep on giving all the way until next holiday season. Sweets lovers will undoubtedly appreciate receiving a box of fresh chocolates each month, while those with more unique tastes may anxiously await the day their monthly shipment of pickles arrives at their doorstep. The options are endless, ensuring there's a monthly subscription out there to tickle every foodie's fancy.

• **Sauce sampler:** Amateur sauciers may find inspiration in a sauce sampler set. Sampler set options abound,

so shoppers can find something for foodies who love a spicy sauce, something more sweet or even in between. Of course, sampler sets also provide a range of sauces, making them ideal for foodies who want something spicy tonight before pivoting to a sweeter dish tomorrow. Flavored olive oil sampler sets also can be a great gift for cooks who love to experiment with new flavors.

• **Charcuterie board and knife set:** Foodies who love to host their fellow food fanatics will no doubt fall in love with a new charcuterie board and knife set. A 2023 report from Kroger revealed that the supermarket chain expected charcuterie boards to remain popular over the course of the year. That popularity makes sense, as anything from meat to cheese to fruit to crackers has a home on a charcuterie board, making the item especially appealing to foodies who routinely share their homes and love of



Foodies who love to host their fellow food fanatics will no doubt fall in love with a new charcuterie board and knife set.

food with friends and family.

• **Espresso maker:** Of course, foodies aren't just about food. Beverages also figure prominently in many

foodies' lives. A high-end espresso maker can ground fresh beans and brew multiple cups in no time at all, making it an ideal addition to any

foodie's culinary arsenal.

Food is a vital component of the holiday season and can even be incorporated into holiday shopping.

Christmas stocking decorating tips and tricks



STAFF REPORTS

Hanging Christmas stockings is just one of the many traditions that fill the days leading up to Christmas. One theory regarding the origins of stockings says the tradition began when a poor widower who had three daughters worried over having enough money for their wedding dowries to help secure the daughters' futures. The women, who had hung their stockings by the fireplace to dry, woke up to find solid gold spheres inside. This legend suggests kindly St. Nicholas visited the home in the night and left the presents, helping ensure the daughters could marry well, after all.

Christmas stockings were

the first places where gifts were stowed, before under the boughs of Christmas trees became the primary spot for placing gifts. Then stockings were secondary vessels reserved for small trinkets. Today stockings are largely Christmas decorations rather than places to place gifts. Still, they're a key component of holiday magic.

When including stockings in holiday festivities, follow these tips for whimsy and more.

• **Utilize stocking holders.** Stocking holders are either metal or wooden devices that are placed on mantels. Hooks on the holders suspend the stockings. Just be sure the holders are sturdy enough to handle the weight of a stuffed

stocking if you plan on filling it with goodies.

• **Determine your style.** There are Christmas stockings that coordinate to just about any interior design style. From farmhouse to modern to traditional, choose one that fits with your aesthetic. That isn't to say you can't mix and match stockings if you prefer a more eclectic, homespun feel.

• **Enhance your stocking look.** If stockings are strictly decorative, enhance their look with a few tricks. First, use tissue paper or balled up shopping bags to stuff the stockings and give them shape. Fill a small baggie with sand or florist glass and place in the heel of the stocking to balance it out and prevent

the stocking from blowing around in the breeze.

• **No fireplace; no problem.** Stockings are traditionally hung from the fireplace mantel, but if you don't have a fireplace there is no need to fret. Simply use ribbons to hang them from the banister of a staircase, or hang stockings right on walls with removable hooks, or from sturdy shelves. You also can think creatively and hang larger stockings on a door like you might a wreath.

Whether they're decorative or functional, stockings can be an integral component of holiday decor in a home.

Simple ways to involve kids in holiday decorating

Millions of people across the globe feel that the holiday season is a magical time of year. Though those people come from all walks of life, it's likely that no group is as taken by the unique spirit of the holiday season as much as children.

Whether they're looking forward to Santa's arrival or preparing for a school holiday pageant, kids have much to be excited about come December. Parents can channel that enthusiasm by involving kids when decorating around the house this holiday season.

• **Make homemade ornaments.** The options are limitless when making holiday ornaments with children. From

simple ornaments made from pine cones picked up outside to more complex projects designed for children nearing adolescence, parents can look to the internet to find design ideas and directions for hundreds of ornaments.

• **Let kids lead the way** when decorating the tree. Families that celebrate Christmas can let kids lead the way when decorating their Christmas tree. Kids are likely to spend the weeks leading up to Santa's arrival gazing in awe at the tree, and knowing they decided where to place the various ornaments on it might make the season even more special for youngsters.

• **Take kids along when**

choosing lawn ornaments. It's not safe to involve children when installing lighting displays, but kids will get a kick out of choosing inflatable lawn decorations and other items to place around the yard. Take kids along when buying new items and then seek their input when placing Frosty, Santa and his reindeer friends around the yard.

• **Include kids in culinary decor.** Many celebrants cannot imagine a holiday season without gingerbread houses and cookies. These traditions provide another great opportunity to involve children in holiday decorating. Set aside some time to make homemade gingerbread houses, which can be used as decora-



tions before they're ultimately eaten. Cookies may not have the shelf life of a typical gingerbread house, but kids can pitch in and decorate

cookies prior to a holiday party or family meal.

The spirit of the holiday season can be seen on the faces of children each

December. Inviting kids to pitch in when decorating for the holidays can make the season even more special for its youngest celebrants.

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How to celebrate the holidays away from home

A popular Christmas song attests 'there's no place like home for the holidays.' For many people, a truer statement couldn't be uttered. But sometimes life gets in the way of an old-fashioned holiday spent at home.

There are a number of reasons why individuals may not be able to spend the holidays at home. Active military service people may not be able to leave their posts to travel home. Some students studying abroad or even far away domestically may find getting back to their homes can be time- and cost-prohibitive. Some people may not be home for the holidays because work obligations keep them out of town, or because they have planned vacations to serve as nontraditional

holiday celebrations. Being away from some familiar sights and sounds of the holidays doesn't mean celebrations should be any less special. Here are tips for celebrating away from home.

- Find people in similar situations. Chances are you will not be the only person away from home, particularly if you are a student or someone on a business venture. Connect with others who are away from their families and do something together for the holidays.

- Partake of local traditional activities. You may be used to baking sugar cookies for the holidays, but in a foreign country, the locals may make another type of dessert. Figure out how the locals celebrate the holidays and then

take part in any way you can.

- Volunteer your time. If you will be away or alone for the holidays, volunteer your time to help the less fortunate. Deliver meals to those who are not able to leave home, like seniors, or volunteer at a soup kitchen. Visit a children's hospital and deliver small gifts.

- Engage in virtual fun. Connect with people at home through the power of digital technology. Video conferencing services connect people who can't be together in person. Utilize these apps and services to remote into a holiday dinner or when loved ones open gifts.

- Cook up your favorites. Evoke traditional holiday celebrations by cooking the foods you would normally

enjoy at home. Those tastes and smells can transport you back to grandma's kitchen or dad's living room.

- Stay off of social media. Being away from home during the holidays can be challenging, and that challenge can be even greater if you see photo after photo on social media of people you know spending time with their friends and loved ones. Tune out of your social feeds for a few days.

- Invite others to you. Maybe you don't have the means of getting home, but you can bring those at home to you. Find out if anyone can plan a road trip, train ride or flight to where you are and then enjoy the holidays together.

Being away from home



during the holidays may not be ideal. However, there are plenty of ways to maintain

your holiday spirit when celebrating in unfamiliar surroundings.

Festive films that make for a perfect family movie night this season

STAFF REPORTS

A family movie night makes for a great way for families to bond and enjoy some relaxing time together.

Such nights are a tradition in households across the globe, and they can even become a fun way for extended families to celebrate the holiday

days together. When hosting overnight guests this holiday season, hosts can plan a family movie night and line up any of these family-friendly

holiday movies.

- 'A Christmas Story' (1983): This beloved classic based on the writings of author Jean Shepherd focuses on young Ralphie Parker and his humorous family. That family includes his father, played to much laughs by legendary actor Darren McGavin. All Ralphie wants for Christmas is a coveted Red Ryder air rifle, and generations of fans have enjoyed watching this film to see if Ralphie's dream comes true.

- 'Home Alone' (1990): Not unlike 'A Christmas Story,' this instant classic devotes much of its story to a young boy. Eight-year-old Kevin McAllister (Macaulay Culkin) awakens to an empty house after his parents forgetfully leave him behind as they depart on a holiday trip to Paris with their extended family. That proves to be bad news for bungling burglars Harry

(Joe Pesci) and Marv (Daniel Stern), who are outwitted by Kevin at every turn.

- Elf (2003): Middle-aged Buddy (Will Ferrell) grew up in the North Pole believing he is an elf, despite being significantly larger than the kind-hearted elves who raised him. Upon learning he is not an actual elf, Buddy is determined to reunite with the father (James Caan) he's never known. Hilarity ensues as the innocent Buddy ends up in the big city in search of his father.

- 'It's a Wonderful Life' (1946): Among the most beloved holiday movies ever made, this classic stars Jimmy Stewart as George Bailey, a devoted family man who set aside his own big-city dreams to save the family business and, ultimately, his small hometown of Bedford Falls. Lamenting some bad luck that leaves him on the

crisp of financial ruin, George wishes he'd never been born, only to be shown by an especially kind and patient angel-in-training (Henry Travers) how much worse off Bedford Falls and its residents might have been had George Bailey never existed.

- 'Jingle All the Way' (1996): Featuring a future Governor of California in the lead role, this hijinks-filled holiday classic follows the efforts of Howard Langston (Arnold Schwarzenegger) as he tries to secure the must-have gift of the season for his son, Jamie (Jake Lloyd). Howard soon finds himself competing against a father (Sinbad) who's equally devoted to find the coveted Turbo-Man action figure.

A holiday movie night makes for a fun, family-friendly evening when hosting overnight guests during this special time of year.



Plan a family movie night and line up any of these family-friendly holiday movies.

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Old-Fashioned Christmas

SATURDAY, DEC. 9 • 10-3 PM
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Free Ice Skating and Children's Activities

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How to pet proof your home when decking the halls



Various pet-proofing strategies can ensure holiday decorations and displays aren't compromised by four-legged friends this season.

STAFF REPORTS

The holiday season is a special time of year. Many factors combine to make the holiday season so unique and festive, and that includes all the effort people put into decorating their homes.

Much thought is given to holiday lighting arrangements and which tree to buy, but it's equally important to consider pets when decorating. Many common household pets are naturally curious, and that curiosity can make it difficult to decorate safely come the holiday season. But various pet-proofing strategies can ensure holiday decorations and displays aren't compromised by four-legged friends this season.

Secure the Christmas tree. Much like other residents of the home, pets may be mesmerized by a glowing Christmas tree. Pets may sniff

around the tree or investigate it closely, which can increase the chances that it tips over. That poses a significant safety hazard and underscores the importance of using a sturdy stand. Fastening the tree to a wall, much like one might do with a television that isn't mounted, adds a further layer of protection from tip-overs.

Block off the base of a live tree. Live trees need water to stay green and keep their needles throughout the season. That water could prove enticing to thirsty pets. Drinking water from a tree stand could increase the risk of the tree tipping over and the water could upset the stomach of pets if the tree was treated with pesticides prior to being brought home. When decorating with a live tree, make sure the base of the tree where the water will be is blocked off. A

small fence around the tree could keep curious pets away. The room where the tree is located should be locked or inaccessible when pets are home alone.

Inspect and conceal light wires. Wires can become frayed over time, and that could pique pets' curiosity. Lighting wires should always be inspected prior to decorating and frayed or damaged wires should be thrown away, even if it means replacing lights. If wires are still sturdy, conceal them along the base of the wall using a cable concealer, which prevents pets from chewing on them.

Avoid lighting candles. Candles should not be lit in homes with pets. Even candles on shelves that are seemingly beyond pets' reach can be hazardous, as pets, especially cats, have a way of accessing spaces they seem-

ingly shouldn't be able to reach. Use electric candles in lieu of traditional ones.

Speak to a vet about seasonal plants and flowers before bringing them into the home. Pet owners can speak with their veterinarians before bringing poinsettias, holly and other seasonal plants and flowers into their homes. Some pets could suffer allergic reactions if they eat certain seasonal plants, so it's best to err on the side of caution and speak to a vet before including live plants and flowers in decorative displays.

Decorating is part of the holiday season. Pet owners must exercise an extra bit of caution to keep their pets and homes safe when decorating during this special time of year.

TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

Holiday Coloring Contest

Hey kids! Submit your coloring page to the contest and you could win ice-skating tickets!



Win 2 tickets to the Stockyards Rodeo Rink!

CONTEST RULES

- Contest open to children ages 2-11.
- Prizes will be awarded for three age groups: 2-4 yrs., 5-7 yrs., and 8-11 yrs.
- Only newspaper coloring sheet will be eligible for judging. No copies.
- All entries must be postmarked or delivered by noon to Tri-County Reporter, 321 W. Main St., Azle, TX 76020
- Entries will be judged on use of color, creativity and overall appearance.

2-4 yrs. • 5-7 yrs. • 8-11 yrs.

Entries must be received by Friday, Dec. 15, 2023

Parents! Don't forget to fill this out!

NAME: _____

GRADE: _____ AGE: _____

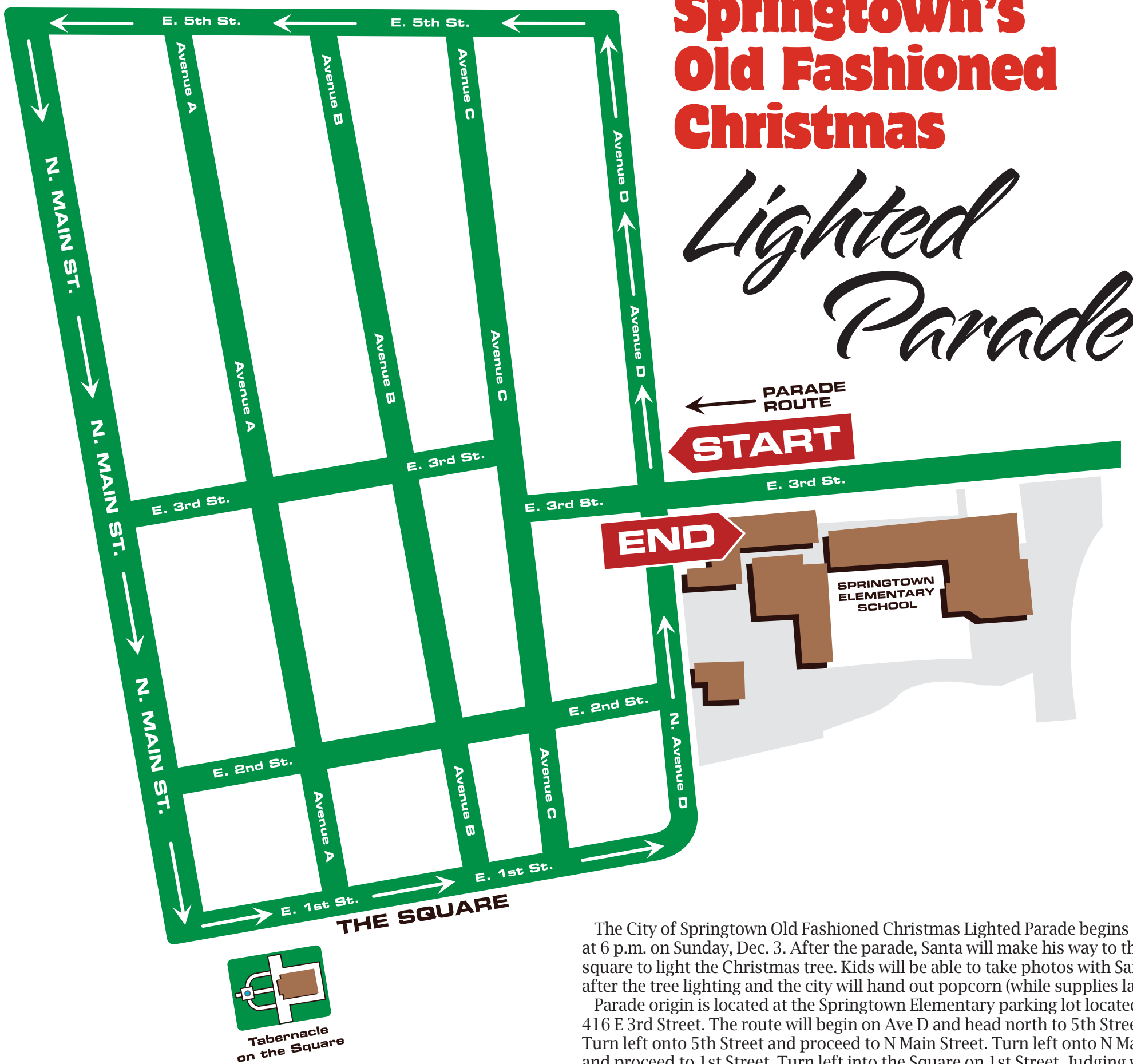
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Tickets good thru Jan 7, 2024

Springtown's Old Fashioned Christmas

Lighted Parade



The City of Springtown Old Fashioned Christmas Lighted Parade begins at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 3. After the parade, Santa will make his way to the square to light the Christmas tree. Kids will be able to take photos with Santa after the tree lighting and the city will hand out popcorn (while supplies last). Parade origin is located at the Springtown Elementary parking lot located at 416 E 3rd Street. The route will begin on Ave D and head north to 5th Street. Turn left onto 5th Street and proceed to N Main Street. Turn left onto N Main and proceed to 1st Street. Turn left into the Square on 1st Street. Judging will occur here so go slow. Continue on 1st Street then Ave D and turn back into SES parking lot to off load participants.



The Grinch and Cindy Lou Who kicked off the showing of last year's parade entries on Nov. 27.

Entries for the parade competition are open now through 4 p.m. Nov. 26.

PARADE RULES:

- No parade entry is allowed to stop their vehicle during the parade route. If your vehicle begins to overheat, please pull out of the parade line as safely as possible.
- No 18 wheelers OR trailers over 16' will be allowed because of tight turns.
- All horse entries must have Coggins Test papers available.
- Parade participants MAY NOT throw any kind of candy/ souvenirs from a float, vehicle, or horseback.
- ADULT WALKERS may

- walk alongside of street to distribute candy and other materials.
- All entries must be lit. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- NO Santas allowed on any float.
- Absolutely NO political entries will be allowed in the parade.
- Parade position will be based on category and numbers will be assigned.
- Parade staging will begin at 4:15 p.m. If you are not checked in by 5:15 p.m., you will not be allowed to participate. NO EXCEPTIONS.
- Parade begins at 6:00 p.m.

- NO OFF LOADING of float rider will be permitted anywhere along the parade route for safety reasons.
- All floats will off load riders at SES parking lot.

PARADE STAGING ENTRY

- Cars, Tractors, Walkers & Floats: ENTER ONLY ON 3RD STREET and proceed to your designated float location.
- Horses & Wagons: Stage at same ENTRANCE ON 3rd STREET and proceed to designated truck/trailer parking area. Manure must be cleaned up before leaving school parking lot.

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Last-minute holiday shopping tips

STAFF REPORTS

Though devotees of early holiday shopping do not hesitate to point out how convenient it can be to get all their gifts long before the arrival of Chanukah and Christmas, scores of shoppers still wait until the last minute to begin checking names off their lists. It might be beneficial to shop early, but it's easy to procrastinate.

Last-minute holiday shopping might not be as enjoyable a custom as family dinners or office parties, but scrambling to find the right gift in the waning days of the holiday season is a familiar situation for millions of shoppers. Shoppers who find themselves with some last-minute shopping on their to-do list can utilize these tips to make the frantic search for the right gift go smoothly.

- Work with store personnel. If a shopping list is lengthy but the time before the holiday arrives is dwindling, speak directly with

store personnel, who may offer suggestions but can also help shoppers find what they need. In-person shoppers can speak with a store clerk immediately upon entering a store, while online shoppers can utilize chat functions on retailers' websites for help finding something that's in stock and deliverable before the big day.

- Expect competition. Though online shopping would seemingly make last-minute shoppers relics of a bygone era, that was not really the case in 2022. A survey of more than 1,000 shoppers conducted by the retail industry publisher Best Black Friday found that just about 16 percent of consumers estimated they would finish their shopping during the week of Christmas. Last-minute shoppers who want to avoid crowds should consider shopping during off-peak hours, such as on weekday mornings and afternoons when most people are working.

- Shop local. Last-minute shoppers may be flocking to malls and busy downtown shopping districts as they hurry to get gifts for friends and family members with different interests. Shopping at small, local businesses can help last-minute shoppers avoid such crowds. And with less on their shelves and smaller storage rooms, small business owners and their staff also tend to know their inventories inside and out. That can ensure a shopping trip is not spent wandering numerous aisles in search of the right gift.

- Bag it, don't wrap it. Shoppers who wait until the very last minute likely won't have time to wrap all the gifts they pick up for loved ones. Gift bags conceal gifts just as well as wrapping paper, but it takes a fraction of the time to place a gift in a bag as it does to wrap it in paper. Quality gift bags also are reusable, which can appeal to anyone looking to create less waste this holiday season.

- Don't forget food. If it's truly impossible to find something late in the season and a gift card feels too impersonal, give the gift of food. Adult recipients also can be gifted a bottle of wine or another spirit that can be enjoyed during a holiday meal. Shoppers skilled in the kitchen can whip up a homemade treat, while those without such talents can give a store-bought delicacy or even a subscription to a monthly food club or service.

Last-minute shopping may look different than it used to, but scores of shoppers still wait to buy gifts for their loved ones. A handful of strategies can simplify last-minute shopping.



Shopping at small, local businesses can help last-minute shoppers avoid such crowds.



Many professional sports teams now welcome fans to tour their stadiums both in-season and during the offseason.

Sports experiences make great gifts this holiday season

STAFF REPORTS

The thrill of sports has inspired billions of loyal fans and athletes across the globe. Professional, collegiate, scholastic, and even recreational sports entertain people all year long. That popularity is something shoppers can keep in mind as they look for the perfect gift for the family sports fan this holiday season.

- Many adults undoubtedly recall receiving sports equipment as a holiday gift when they were children. Whether it's a baseball mitt or a field hockey stick or a new ball, these gifts tend to light up kids' eyes come Christmas morning. Adult sports fans may not need such equipment, but they might be just as excited to receive these unique sports experiences this holiday season.

- Tickets: For diehard sports fans, nothing is better than going to the big game.

Perhaps in acknowledgment of the growing popularity of following a favorite team on the road, many professional sports leagues now release team schedules months in advance of the first game of the season. For example, the National Football League released its 2022 schedule in mid-May, despite the fact that the season does not begin until September. Shoppers can peruse schedules and circle a must-see home game or lay the foundation for a memorable trip by giving tickets to a road game.

- Stadium tour: Stadium tours are another great experience the family sports fan will undoubtedly appreciate. Many professional sports teams now welcome fans to tour their stadiums both in-season and during the off-season. These tours offer a behind-the-scenes look at stadiums, arenas and ballparks. Teams may even host tours on game days, making this a

great stocking stuffer to pair with tickets to a game.

- Fan fest: Fan fest tickets make an ideal gift for individuals who can be accurately described as 'diehards' for their favorite teams. These family-friendly gatherings tend to happen in the weeks leading up to the start of a new season. A handful of current and former players typically attend fan fests, which are hosted by the team and typically include activities for adults and children alike.

- Lessons: Holiday shoppers may have a sports fan on their list who still enjoys lacing up their cleats. For example, pro golf fans may still enjoy hitting the links themselves. In such instances, lessons from a nearby golf pro can be just the thing to make sports fans smile this holiday season.

Sports experiences make an ideal gift for individuals whose passion for a favorite team is a big part of their life.

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