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Community events bring Yuletide spirit

By Holly Beeson
 Reporter

If you're trying to get into the Christmas spirit this holiday season, several community activities could help put you in the mood.

The public is invited to view several lighted displays at Central Park in College Station for the annual Christmas in the Park event. Lights are on from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. through December and admission is free.

"We have more displays this year with more than 50,000 lights," says Sheila Walker, special projects coordinator for the City of College Station Parks and Recreation Department.

Another Christmas display is the Winter Wonderland Forest, located at the Brazos Center in Bryan.

"There will be 20 trees in a forest-type setting decorated by various civic groups and schools," says Jody Bates, education director for the Brazos Valley Museum. There also will be a village area with doll houses and a train.

The display begins Dec. 10 and

will last through Dec. 18. Hours are from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. on weekends and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays. Admission is \$1 per person and groups of 10 or more receive a 50 percent discount with reservations.

Another community activity will be the performance of "Rumpelstiltskin" by Magination Station.

"We are a community theater group dedicated to performing live theater for young people," Jo Beth Gonzales, artistic director for Magination Station, says.

The play will be performed at A&M Consolidated Junior High School on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m. and on Dec. 10 at 12 p.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Admission is \$3 for children and \$1.50 for adults if accompanied by a child.

Members of the Texas A&M University faculty and staff are invited to the President's Christmas Party on Dec. 19 from 9:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. in the MSC.

Manor East Mall in Bryan will be hosting a Christmas art display Dec. 9-11 from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

What's Up

Friday

AGGIE PARTNERS FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS: will have a Christmas dance at 7 p.m. in 212 MSC.
INTERNATIONAL CELEBRANT SINGERS: will give a free concert at 7 p.m. at Aldersgate United Methodist Church.
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: call the Center for Drug Prevention and Education at 845-0280 for details on today's meeting.
FISH CAMP '89: counselor applications will be available Jan. 16 in 213 Pavilion.

Saturday

CATHOLIC STUDENT ASSOCIATION: will leave to visit a nursing home at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mary's Student Center.

Sunday

TAMU INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCERS: will demonstrate and teach folk dancing from 8-10 p.m. in 226 MSC.
CATHOLIC STUDENT ASSOCIATION: will have a discussion of the Bible over coffee and donuts at 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary's Student Center.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

Chaplains bring peace to places of war

NEW YORK (AP) — The military chaplain walks a fine line, upholding religious principles of trust, peace and kindness in organizations geared for the rigors of war.

"Cooperation without compromise," reads the Army chaplains' motto.

"We do ministry without compromise and without apology," says Gen. Stuart A. Barstad, retiring this month after three years as Air Force chief of chaplains.

"Peace movements should not think they have a corner on the market," he adds. "They are not the only ones interested in peace."

Barstad and three other top U.S. military chaplains commented on their roles in recent interviews with The Lutheran, the monthly magazine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Remarkably, all of them are clergymen of that denomination, as is the nation's fifth top military chaplain, Army Col. Herbert B. Cleveland, director of chaplain services for the Veterans Administration.

Altogether, they oversee work of about 15,000

military chaplains and assistants of various faiths serving families of nearly 3,000,000 members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and National Guard, besides veterans.

The chaplaincy chiefs say they're carrying out full, undiluted ministry in an environment that keenly needs it.

"The military has never asked me to hold back on my ministry or my preaching," says Barstad, originally from Colfax, Wis.

Maj. Gen. Norris Einertson, Army chief of chaplains, calls it a "ministry of presence."

"My parishioners (Army personnel) are contributing to peace in a troubled world," he says.

He says American churches are not teaching Christians to think critically about war and peace, resulting in their either approving armed conflict indiscriminately or rejecting it as always wrong.

Rear Adm. Alvin B. Koeneman, Navy chief of chaplains, concedes the work involves some tensions, but these must be seen in light of what Christianity says about the sinful nature of societies as well as about peace.

"It's tough to talk about the peace of Jesus while working on an ammunition ship," he says. "But sailors live in that situation. Someone needs to be there to live the contradiction with them and wrestle with it."

Col. Walter Hiskett, Marine chief of chaplains, was a wounded combat veteran of the Korean war before entering the ministry and then volunteering for his first tour of duty as a chaplain in Vietnam.

For that, he calls himself "dumb-dumb," but adds, "These people deserve ministry. The thought of no chaplaincy, no ministry to these people was unconscionable."

The chiefs point out that they advise command staffs on matters of morale as well as religion and morals, thus exerting an influence on military policy.

They "make an impact on the institution," Barstad says. "The military is part of our national structure."

"We must ask, 'Do we want to be represented there, and how best can we minister—as insiders or outsiders?'"

Hanukkah celebrates Jewish triumph

NEW YORK (AP) — The story is that with only enough oil to last for one day, the lamps miraculously burned for eight.

That's one of the wonders of Hanukkah, whose crescendo of lights reaches its peak Saturday at sunset when Jewish homes and synagogues glow with the full eight tapers of the menorahs.

It's the religious calendar's prelude to Christmas, which is separate but that indirectly hinges on the ancient event marked by that effusion of Jewish lights.

Starting with a customary single candle when the holiday began last Saturday, an additional one was lit on each successive night until the full-orbed tier of eight shines this weekend.

The holiday, a time of games and gift-giving, is sometimes regarded as a Jewish counterpart of Christmas and both signify a new start, a fresh element of faith.

Also, without the precedent of Hanukkah, scholars point out that there presumably could be no Christmas.

The Jewish "festival of lights" celebrates an ancient turn of history that prevented destruction of the "mother faith" of Judaism from which the Christian tradition emerged.

But the specific significance and origins of two holidays differ, with Christmas marking the birth of Christ and Hanukkah recalling a much earlier event of great joy—Judaism's regained right to exist.

This happened in about 165 B.C. when a small guerrilla army led by Judas Maccabee, the "hammerer," defeated the world's then mightiest military force of Syria, which had sought to stamp out every vestige of Jewish religion.

The ancient victory was celebrated by cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem of installed pagan altars and prostitutes and rededicating it with kindling of its lamps.

On a one-day oil supply, legend says, those lamps inexplicably kept on burning for eight.

But the phenomenon of the lamps had a surpassing antecedent — the amazing victory by a small, motley mountain band of guerrillas over the foreign conqueror, the ancient Syrian empire.

It had spread over the entire Middle East and ordered the extermination of all traces of Judaism so that subjects would be "one people" serving the state pantheon of idols.

"Whoever refuses should be put to death," it was decreed, and thousands of Jews were slain. Scripture scrolls were ripped apart and burned. Many Jews submitted and bowed to the state idols.

Many Jews submitted and bowed to the state idols.

All over Israel, pagan altars were erected and patrols circulated to compel allegiance to the new "gods." Jewish observance of the Sabbath was forbidden.

In the Temple, turned into a scene of debaucheries, stood a statue to Jupiter.

If the suppression had succeeded, it would have crushed Judaism, which would have eliminated the seedbed of Christianity.

But revolt flamed against that threat.

An aging father of five sons, the Maccabees, attacked and killed a Syrian officer who was forcing Jewish villagers to make offerings to a pagan altar. The Maccabees fled to the hills.

Gathering a scanty, ill-equipped crew of resistance fighters, the eldest

Georgia group seeks to put 'Christ' back into 'Christmas'

ELLENWOOD, Ga. (AP) — The 1988 "Alternatives" poster shows a sleighing Santa and reindeer flying over the family of the newborn Jesus in the manger. A caption asks, "Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?"

"Alternatives," a campaign seeking to recover a Christ-centered Christmas and to protest its commercialization, this year has the backing of more than 100,000 Protestant and Roman Catholic congregations across the country.

Milo Thornberry, director of the campaign founded by various Christian groups in 1975, says it doesn't want people to reject the whole notion of gift-giving and celebration or go away on a "guilt trip" about it.

Rather, it seeks to help them "restore perspective to a season that often degenerates into a religion-sanctioned orgy of self-indulgence."

Sponsoring agencies for 1988 are Detroit's Catholic Diocese and seven major Protestant denominations.

"Alternatives," which distributes resource material, rituals and Bible study guides, suggests such alternative activities as:

- Reducing time spent shopping and watching television and using it for Bible study and meditation.
- Replacing the Santa tradition with that of St. Nicholas, patron saint who loved and cared for children.
- More personal, thoughtful and values-centered gift-giving instead of money-spending competitions to give "the best."
- Giving a fourth of holiday spending money to the needy, and reaching out to people who otherwise would be alone at Christmas.

Maccabee son, Judas, told them, "Arm yourselves and be brave. It is better for us to die in battle than to witness the ruin of our nation and our sanctuary."

It was a one-sided, three-year war, marking the first successful use of guerrilla tactics — lighting strikes and retreats, surprise attacks, ambushes, night raids, harassments.

At one point, with a Jewish army of about 3,000 gazing down from the hills at the assembled Syrian force of 47,000, including horsemen, foot soldiers and spearmen on elephants, Jewish troops murmured-

"How can we, few as we are, fight such a mighty host as this?"

Judas Maccabee told them, "In the sight of heaven there is no difference between deliverance by many or few... so do not be afraid of them."

By various ruses, scattered night attacks, diversions, covert movements and infiltrating lines to kill off Syrian commanders, the Maccabees finally beat off the Syrian repression.

Without those Hanukkah lights, the Christmas lights might never have come on.

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