



## PRESS-REGISTER

### Here comes Santa Claus, here comes Santa Claus ...

**Fundraisers on tap this weekend for Santa-America charity, as holiday season comes to life in Baldwin**

Friday, November 23, 2007

**By DUFFIE TAYLOR**  
Staff Reporter

Santa Claus will be making two special appearances this weekend to help children and families in need -- at Fish River Christmas Tree Farm in Summerdale and The Wharf in Orange Beach.

Santa Claus, his elves and a favorite pair of reindeer will be stopping by Fish River Christmas Tree Farm every weekend from 1 to 4 p.m. starting today and continuing through Dec. 24.

Fish River Trees' owner Steve Mannhard said visiting reindeer were Santa's special treat to Baldwin County:

"Santa dropped them off because we've been so good this year," he said.

The farm teamed up with the jolly old elf on a special mission for Santa-America, the largest Santa volunteer organization, originally based on the Eastern Shore.

The nonprofit organization sends Santa all over the world to provide counseling and comfort for children having to face long-term illnesses and traumatic situations.

The farm will donate \$1 from every Christmas tree sold to the organization as a contribution to the cause.

Santa-America's founder Ernest Berger said he was amazed by "the compassion, heart, and support" he has received from Mannhard and others.

"A lot of the funding we use for the entire year comes from places like Fish River Trees," he said.

As part of Santa-America Weekend, St. Nick and several elves from Bayside Academy will lead Santa's Grand Parade around the tree farm at 1 p.m. Sunday. At that time the public can join Santa on a Christmas tree tour that will feature a pair of his prized reindeer.

Mannhard said that his need for a Santa Claus and the organization's need for public support made Santa-America a perfect charity fit for his tree farm.

"I really like the volunteer work these guys do. It's a thing that really gets us in the Christmas spirit," he said.

Mannhard has been selling trees on the 45-acre farm for 26 years. His farm includes a 5-acre nursery with 4,000 Christmas trees ripe and ready to be cut down and carted home, along with some potted trees that can be replanted, Mannhard said.

Mannhard said that on weekends customers can hop on the "Tannebaum Express" for a free "tree train" tour around the farm's property.

Starting today and continuing through Dec. 24, Fish River Tree Farm will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mannhard said.

The Wharf will also be hosting a Santa-America weekend fundraiser, starting with Buffalo Rock-Pepsi's Christmas Tree Lighting tonight at 6. Festivities for the night will include the lighting of the 35-foot-tall tree, traditional Christmas carols by a four-person barbershop quartet, skating at the ice rink and plenty of photograph opportunities with Santa and his elves.

The Wharf's 50- by 70-foot ice rink is under the wide arch at Levin's Bend Condominiums on Main Street and Wharf Parkway. The enormous tree will light up in front of the ice rink on the boardwalk. Santa will make visits from 6 to 8 p.m. today and from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday every weekend up until Christmas.

The Wharf will donate a \$1 of each ice rink ticket purchased over the weekend to contribute to Santa-America's mission. Tickets cost \$6 per person and include skate rental, while combo tickets with skating and a Ferris wheel ride cost \$9 per person.

"This is a laid-back weekend where everyone comes with a camera to meet Santa and watch the tree lighting," said The Wharf-Special Events Coordinator Lesley Dethloff.

The holiday season kicks into high gear across Baldwin County, with some of the special events and activities as follows:

**TUESDAY, NOV. 27**

**EASTERN SHORE ART CENTER** will offer "Christmas Coffee with Carl Clark" from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesday. The cost is \$10 for members and \$15 for non-members. Clark, owner of Southern Veranda Flowers, will demonstrate innovative ways to use native greenery to give your home that extra special Christmas look. Clark has been in the flower business for 26 years and is well known throughout the area for his arrangements and holiday decorations.

**THURSDAY, NOV. 29**

**DAPHNE CHRISTMAS PARADE** will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, followed by the lighting of the tree on Main Street in Olde Towne Daphne. For more information, call 621-3703.

**FRIDAY, NOV. 30**

**CHRISTMAS ON THE COAST** will be presented at 7 p.m. Nov. 30 at the L.D. Owen Performing Arts Center on Faulkner State Community College's Bay Minette campus and 7 p.m. Dec. 3 at the Gulf Shores campus. The group will perform many of the classic Christmas tunes. Admission is free at the Bay Minette event. Tickets for the Gulf Shores performance are \$30 and includes a large dessert buffet, prepared by FSCC culinary arts students. Call the Gulf Shores campus at 968-3104 for ticket information.

**SATURDAY, DEC. 1**

**SPANISH FORT** will hold its first "Spirit of Christmas" parade at 9 a.m. Dec. 1. Former Mayor Ray Carter will serve as the honorary grand marshal. The parade will be held at the Eastern Shore Centre, featuring floats, marching bands, choirs, organizations, dancing and walking groups. There is \$25 float registration fee. Prizes will be awarded to most creative float or group, best of show and the Mayor's Choice float or group. Donations will be accepted for two local charities -- Maddie's Fund, a pet rescue group, and North Baldwin White Christmas program. For details, call 625-0060 or 626-4884.

**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BAZAAR** will be presented beginning at 9 a.m. Dec. 1 by the Ladies of St. Margaret's Catholic Church, featuring a silent auction, tree trimmers, jewelry and more. A spaghetti dinner will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The church is on U.S. 98 at Schumacher Street in Foley. Call 955-1370 for more information.

**ROBERTSDALE CHRISTMAS PARADE** will be held at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 1 on the streets of downtown Robertsdale. For more information, call town hall at 947-8900.

**CHRISTMAS IN PERDIDO** will be held 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 1 at Perdido School. Activities will include arts and crafts booths and live musical entertainment. The event is sponsored by Perdido School PTO.

**COUNTRY CHRISTMAS BAZAAR**, presented by the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Patrick's Church in Robertsdale, will be held from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Dec. 1 and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 2 at the church. Featured items will be assorted gift baskets, baked goods, jellies, jams, pickles and gifts for all.

**SUNDAY, DEC. 2**

**WESTMINSTER VILLAGE** of Spanish Fort will present its annual Festival of Trees with an open house and silent auction from 2 to 4 p.m. Dec. 2. The decorated trees, which will be auctioned during the open house, will be on display through Dec. 17.

**COUNTRY CHRISTMAS BAZAAR**, presented by the Ladies Auxiliary of St. Patrick's Church in Robertsdale, will be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 2 at the church. Featured items will be assorted gift baskets, baked goods, jellies, jams, pickles and gifts for all.

**MONDAY, DEC. 3**

**CHRISTMAS ON THE COAST** will be presented at 7 p.m. Dec. 3 at the Gulf Shores campus. The group will perform many of the classic Christmas tunes. Tickets are \$30 and includes a large dessert buffet, prepared by FSCC culinary arts students. Call the Gulf Shores campus at 968-3104 for ticket information.

THURSDAY, DEC. 6

**CITY OF GULF SHORES** Christmas tree lighting and open house events will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Dec. 6 at the Civic Center, museum, recreation center and library. Entertainment, refreshments, tree lighting, games, stories crafts and fellowship will be featured.

FRIDAY, DEC. 7

**CHRISTMAS FEST** will be held Dec. 7-8 in downtown Bay Minette. The festival will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year. Food and craft booths will be open both days. The annual Christmas parade will be held at 1 p.m. Dec. 8. For more information, call the chamber office at 937-5665.

**FAIRHOPE CHRISTMAS PARADE** will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 7 in downtown Fairhope. Fairhope First Quality of Life recipients Dr. Hollis Wiseman, Teko Wiseman and Joe Riemer will be the grand marshals. The parade begins at the intersection of Morphy and Section Street and continues down Section to Oak Street. WABF 1220 will broadcast the parade live. Call 929-1466 for more information.

**CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK**, sponsored by the city of Foley Beautification Board will begin at 6 p.m. Dec. 7 in the John B. Foley Park. The event will feature Christmas music, Santa Claus and the lighting of the Christmas tree. Call 943-1545 for more information.

**SILVERHILL CHRISTMAS PA RADE** will be held at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 7 in downtown Silverhill. The Silverhill beginner band will entertain the crowd beginning at 6 p.m. in the town gazebo.

**BEDTIME STORIES WITH SAN TA**, sponsored by the Heritage Junior Women's Club of Bay Minette, begins at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 7 at the Bay Minette Public Library. Jamie Tillery will lead the reading of "Twas the Night Before Christmas," and Santa Claus will also put in an appearance to hear Christmas wishes from boys and girls. Admission is free and children are encouraged to come dressed in their pajamas. The event is held in conjunction with the 25th annual Christmas Fest, set for Dec. 7 and 8 in downtown Bay Minette.

SATURDAY, DEC. 8

**ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH** will hold its annual bake sale and chili lunch from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dec. 8. The church is on Alabama 59 S. in Robertsedale. Takeouts are available; call 947-6011.

**PANCAKES WITH SANTA** will be held from 8 to 10 a.m. Dec. 8 at Mary's Restaurant in Bay Minette. The event, sponsored by the Bay Minette Kiwanis Club, is being held in conjunction with Christmas Fest activities in downtown Bay Minette. Tickets for the breakfast are \$5 per person. For details, call Mike Caldwell at 937-5529.

**FOLEY CHRISTMAS PARADE**, sponsored by the Foley Kiwanis Club, will be held at 10 a.m. Dec. 8 on the streets of Uptown Foley. Call 943-5001 for more information.

**LET IT SNOW**, a holiday celebration, will be held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Foley's Heritage Park. The free event will feature lots of snow, games, prizes, music, storytelling, food and entertainment. Call Kathy Danielson at 943-1200 for details.

**FAIRHOPE EDUCATIONAL EN RICHMENT FOUNDATION** will hold its annual Cookies with Santa event from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Dec. 8 at Oak Hollow Farms on U.S. 98 in Fairhope. Students from all the Fairhope schools will participate in holiday entertainment performances. Thomas Hospital will provide cookies and hot chocolate as well as free pictures of children with Santa. The event is free and open to the public. Donations of canned goods will be accepted at the door to support Ecumenical Ministries.

**LOXLEY CHRISTMAS PARADE**, sponsored by the Loxley Optimists Club, will be held at 10 a.m. Dec. 8, beginning in the Loxley Church of God parking lot. For more information, call 964-5162.

**SUMMERDALE CHRISTMAS PA RADE** will be held at 4 p.m. Dec. 8 beginning at Summerdale School. For more information, call 989-6202.

**NORTH BALDWIN INFIRMARY WELLNESS CENTER** will hold its annual Christmas Fest 5K Fun Run on Dec. 8. The races begin and end at Community Kids Park on the corner of McMillan Avenue and Third Street in Bay Minette. The 5K Fun Run begins at 8 a.m. The one-mile fun run/walk follows at 9 a.m. For more information on the Christmas Fest 5K Fun Run, call the Wellness Center at 937-9099.

**LIVEOAK VILLAGE INDEPEN DENT** and Assisted Living Center will hold its first Holiday Bazaar from 10

a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 8 at their facility in Foley. More than 20 artists and crafters will be on hand to show and sell their products, including hand-crafted jewelry, purses, quilts, afghans, pottery, candles, rugs, lamps, holiday wreaths, trees, centerpieces, night lights and ornaments, skin care gift baskets and much more. Call Susan Storey at 943-6733 for more information.

**CHRISTMAS BY THE BAY TOUR OF HOMES** will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 8 in Lillian. Tickets are \$15 and available at Lillian Perdido Library and Champagne Optical in Lillian, Vision Banks in Elberta and Foley, and Gallery at the Wharf in Orange Beach, or by contacting Louise Hawley at 961-2858. All proceeds will assist in supporting the Lillian Volunteer Fire Department, Lower Alabama Search and Rescue and the Lillian Perdido Library Association.

**ORANGE BEACH ART CENTER OPEN HOUSE** will be held from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 8 featuring work for sale by local artists and crafters. Santa Claus will be on hand for the event.

"NAUTICAL NIGHT OF LIGHTS," the 22nd annual Christmas Boat Parade in Pleasure island, will be held Dec. 8. The parade will begin its cruise at 5 p.m. at LuLu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores and will end at Sportsman Marina in Orange Beach at approximately 8 p.m. Call 968-6091 for more information.

SUNDAY, DEC. 9

**SOUTH BALDWIN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER** Auxiliary will again holds its the Lights of Love ceremony. Each "light" (ornament) on the Christmas tree will represent a donation in honor or in memory of a special person. The dedication ceremony and reception will be held 4 p.m. Dec. 9 in the hospital lobby. Anyone interested in supporting the project and wanting a donation form mailed can contact the hospital at 949-3563.

MONDAY, DEC. 31

**KICHLER-PIPPIN VFW POST 5658** in Elberta will host a New Year's Eve party Dec. 31. Doors will open at 7 p.m., and music will be provided by the Jimmy Clark Duo from 8 p.m. until midnight. A breakfast will be served after midnight. Advance tickets can be purchased at the post at a discount but will also be sold at the door on the night of the event. Call 986-8201 for tickets.

/cut/p31.9/cPhoto courtesy of Ernest BergerSanta-America founder Ernest Berger visits with 6-month-old G. "Ernie" Crassas at the Fish River Christmas Tree Farm last year. This season, Santa Claus, his elves and a favorite pair of reindeer will be stopping by the tree farm every weekend from 1 to 4 p.m. starting today and continuing through Dec. 24.

/CUT/p15.6/CDUFFIE TAYLOR/ RegisterOne of Santa's reindeer takes a break from his busy schedule this season at Fish River Christmas Tree Farm. Santa and a pair of his reindeer will be at the farm throughout the sales season for customers to admire.

/CUT/3/CDUFFIE TAYLOR/ RegisterA pair of Santa's reindeer take time to munch on some grass at Fish River Christmas Tree Farm. With a heavy workload ahead of them, the animals are storing up enough energy to perform well this Christmas. Santa and his reindeer will be at the farm throughout the sales season for customers to admire.

/CUT/3/CDUFFIE TAYLOR/ RegisterOne of Santa's reindeer takes a break from flight long enough to show off his antlers at Fish River Christmas Tree Farm.

/CUT/p31.10/CDUFFIE TAYLOR/ RegisterFish River Trees' Tannebaum Express will take customers on "tree train" tours along the 45-acre Christmas Tree Farm on weekends starting today and continuing through Dec. 24.

/CUT/2/CJON HAUGE /CorrespondentThe Eastern Shore Centre in Spanish Fort has decked its halls for the legions of shoppers on "Black Friday." Santa Claus will be available for pictures from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. today and Saturday; and from noon to 6 p.m. Sunday.

/cut/3/cRegister file photoErnest Berger is the founder of Santa-America, which helps send St. Nick comfort and entertain children. Two fundraisers this weekend will help raise money for the organization begun on the Eastern Shore.

%%head%%Holiday activities set across county%%ehead%% %%bodybegin%%

8 Holiday

© 2007 Press-Register

© 2007 al.com All Rights Reserved.