

Charlestown preparing to become “Christmas City”, Light Up Charlestown set

Written by Janna Ross

Wednesday, 18 November 2009 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 18 November 2009 14:35

While most citizens are preparing their menus for the upcoming Thanksgiving day meal and looking forward to the time spent with family and friends, some have already started planning for the Christmas season.

Many citizens have taken advantage of the present from Mother Nature, the beautiful weather in early November, to begin decorating their yards and homes for the season. While those citizens have taken their hundreds of lights and made beautiful scenes, some working with the City of Charlestown have taken hundreds of thousands of lights to make Charlestown the Christmas City.

“We have 108,800 lights ready right now,” stated Josh Campbell, who is part of the mastermind behind the lighted Christmas show. Campbell, along with Mark Obermiller, have spent some 600 hours thus far, preparing for the city’s big holiday season kick-off, Light Up Charlestown.

Obermiller is locally famous for his extravagant light display at his home in Lexington. Campbell first met Obermiller when he was traveling home from visiting family in Scottsburg and noticed the light display in 2002.

“I stumbled on Mark’s display in 2002. I stopped and seen it. I then went a couple more times in 2002,” Campbell stated.

He continued, “Christmas is my holiday. I have been fascinated with lights since I was a kid. I remember going to Graceland Baptist Church in New Albany as a kid. I have just always been fascinated with lights.”

Obermiller and Campbell have been working diligently on the lights for the display since August. They began this year’s planning with a symposium in Louisville.

“We attended a symposium at the Hyatt Regency in Louisville. It was an all day Christmas lighting seminar. It was great,” Campbell stated.

“It was like seeing everyone that had the same obsession as you,” Obermiller said with a laugh.

This year’s Light Up Charlestown activities will be held on Friday, November 27 beginning at 5 p.m. This is the 10th anniversary of Light Up Charlestown and this year’s theme is “One Community Under God.”

“We have a lot of new things this year. We have churches involved this year. We have events from Light Up all the way to the weekend before Christmas,” stated Charlestown Mayor Bob Hall. “It’s exciting. There are a lot of new things to come and enjoy.”

The core group of planners for the Christmas events in the City of Charlestown have not only planned the biggest and best Light Up Charlestown event in 10 years, they have also planned family-fun events throughout the holiday season.

“We have events planned from Light Up to December 19,”stated Rhonda Davidson, Assistant to the Parks Advisory Board.

The city’s radio station will broadcast all the information needed for the events leading up to Christmas on 87.9.

“Interviews are being done now. We should be ready to go sometime next week,” Davidson stated during the Thursday morning interview. “The radio station and the web site (www.cityofcharlestown.com) will be full of all the information they will need for Light Up and the weekends following.”

Light Up Charlestown will be held in Greenway Park the Friday after Thanksgiving. Activities will begin at 5 p.m and continue through 9 p.m.

“Josh and Mark have worked so hard to get this together. I don’t have the words to describe

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how they put all this together to give us the beautiful light display. I can't even find the words to describe it," Davidson stated. "The city employees are also working hard to make Light Up memorable for local families. We have volunteers from local churches, the Charlestown Beautification Committee and residents, all working to make this come together. We have some 30 citizens in the community choir who are already rehearsing for the Light Up. They are all amazing."

The schedule of events will have something for every member of the family.

"The Parks Department and Mayor Hall are working to create family memories and affordable family events," Davidson added. "We want families to be able to stay in town and create cherished memories. Our goal is to give something back to the community."

One of the more popular activities during Light Up is the horse drawn carriage rides through the park and Christmas village. The carriage rides will be during Light Up Charlestown on a first-come, first-serve basis. The carriage rides will begin at 5:30 p.m. You may register on the city's website at www.cityofcharlestown.com for the rides during Light Up. Registration must be 24 hours prior to the event. The carriage rides will also be held every Friday and Saturday night beginning November 28 through December 19. The cost of the carriage rides will be \$2 per person and children 6 and under will be free.

During Light Up Charlestown, the members of the Charlestown High School Junior Varsity and Varsity Boys Basketball team will also be on hand to help patrons of the carriage rides in and out of the carriage.

Christmas cards are also a large part of local families' Christmas celebration. This year the city will also have Christmas cards, just in a larger format. City officials have designed 4' x 8' wooden Christmas cards to be opened during Light Up Charlestown. The students at Pleasant Ridge Elementary and Jonathan Jennings Elementary Schools have designed ornaments to place on the Christmas cards for display. The children will hand the ornaments as part of the festivities this year.

"After Light Up we will take the cards to the schools to be on display there," Davidson explained.

The Charlestown High School Cheerleaders will be selling delicious baked goods during Light Up Charlestown.

"They still need some \$2,000 more to get to Texas," Davidson explained. "They are leaving for Texas on December 26 to compete in Nationals."

The Charlestown High School Theatre Department will also be selling yummy baked goods during the Light Up Charlestown festivities.

"I hope people will help support both of these groups," Davidson added.

The Charlestown Beautification Committee will be on hand selling hot chocolate and apple cider to help raise funds for the upcoming year.

The concession stand in Greenway Park will also be open during the Light Up Charlestown event.

Light Up Charlestown

Schedule

5 to 9 p.m.- Concessions and tickets may be purchased for carriage rides. Carriage rides will be in 20-minute intervals. Charlestown Beautification Committee will sell hot chocolate, CHS Cheerleaders and CHS Drama group will sell baked goods.

5 to 5:25 p.m.- Christmas Music

5:30 to 6:10 p.m.- Open Christmas Cards for Pleasant Ridge and Jonathan Jennings

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students to hang ornaments.

5:30 to 6:15 p.m.- Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer arrive via fire trucks.

5:40 to 5:40 p.m.- Angela Martin and Jonathan Jennings and Pleasant Ridge Elementary Choirs sing

5:40 to 5:50 p.m.- Holly Abbott sing

5:50 to 6 p.m.- CHS Theatre presents “Bah Humbug”- A Christmas Carol.

6 to 6:15 p.m.- Angela Martin sings

6:20 to 6:30 p.m.- Welcome from Charlestown Mayor Bob Hall and Clerk Treasurer Donna Coomer.

6 to 9 p.m.- Live Nativity

6:20 to 6:30 p.m.- Everyone gathers for countdown to Light Up Charlestown

6:40 to 6:45 p.m.- Turn off all lights and prepare for countdown.

6:45 p.m.- Light Up Charlestown and Hallelujah Chorus by combined Charlestown Churches Choir.

7 to 9 p.m.- Christmas music, food and entertainment. Santa will be in his Holiday House on the square to meet with children.

“We are really excited about partnering with the local churches. They have been involved in the step-by-step planning process,” Davidson added. “The Parks Department, Charlestown Beautification Committee and the Ministerial Association have all come together to organize and plan the event.”

Once Light Up Charlestown finishes there is no need to worry. Holiday-themed events will continue through the weekend before Christmas. Additional carriage rides, Santa Shop, Breakfast with Santa Claus and the annual Tour of Homes, are just some of the festivities planned after Light Up Charlestown.

The additional events include:

*Tuesday, November 24 through Thursday, December 10- Elf Tree-

Help a local child in need this Christmas by participating in the North Clark Outreach Center’s Elf Tree program. Individuals, churches and businesses are invited to select the name of a local child to provide gifts for this Christmas. Each Elf Tree child’s wants, needs and likes will be listed on a card, making shopping for the kids fun and easy.

All names on the Elf Tree are provided by Charlestown-area schools. To participate in the Elf Tree program, pick a child’s name from the Elf Tree at the Charlestown locations of the New Washington State Bank or the Jay-C Store starting on November 24, and return gifts to either location by Thursday, December 10.

*Saturday, November 28, and every Friday and Saturday before Christmas:- Carriage Rides- Horse-drawn carriage rides through Greenway Park and Charlestown’s Christmas Village. Just \$2 per rider, children 6 and under free. 20 minute intervals. 6 to 9 p.m.

*Santa Shop- Kids can come to work in Santa’s Workshop in the Greenway Park Concession Stand. Santa has a variety of crafts projects for kids to work on, and he or his friends, like Frosty the Snowman and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, could stop to check in! Participation is free for children age 12 and under. Santa Shop will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. The Santa Shop is free.

*Concession Stand- The Concession Stand in Greenway Park will sell drinks and snacks from 6 to 8 p.m.

*Thursday, December 3, Saturday, December 5 and Sunday, December 6- Bah Humbug: A

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Christmas Carol-Charlestown High School Theatre performs the holiday favorite, based on Charles Dickens' classic novel. The play will be presented at 7 p.m. Thursday, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, and 2 p.m. Sunday. The price will be \$8 general admission, \$5 students and senior citizens. There is no Friday night performance due to a home basketball game.

*Friday and Saturday, December 4 and 5- Joy to the World- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 8209 State Road 403. The event will be held from 6:30-9 p.m. and is free to the public.

There will also be carriage rides, Santa Shop and the concession stand will be open for enjoyment in Greenway Park.

*Friday and Saturday, December 11 and 12- Carriage Rides, Santa Shop and Concession Stand will be open for your enjoyment in Greenway Park.

*Saturday, December 12- Breakfast with Santa Claus- Saint Nick will join the first 200 guests for a free breakfast of pancakes, sausage and eggs. Kids can visit with Santa and families can work together to make gingerbread houses from 8 to 11 a.m. at Arts and Enrichment Center, 999 Water Street. The event is free.

*Saturday, December 12-Tour of Homes- Go inside some of the most beautifully decorated homes in Charlestown during the annual Tour of Homes. Tickets go on sale at 4 p.m. at the Arts and Enrichment Center located at 999 Water Street. Tours will be conducted from 5 to 9 p.m. \$10 per person.

*Sunday, December 13- Christmas Music- Charlestown Independent Church, 9575 State Road 62, 7 p.m. The event is free.

*Louisville Symphony Christmas Program- First United Methodist Church, 423 Main Cross Street. Refreshments will follow. The event will begin at 7 p.m. and is free.

*Monday, December 14- Christmas Band Concert- The Charlestown High School and Charlestown Middle School bands will perform at the Charlestown High School Auditorium located at 1 Pirate Place. The concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. and is free to the public.

*Thursday, December 17- Christmas Choir Concert- The Charlestown High School and Charlestown Middle School choirs will perform at the Charlestown High School Auditorium located at 1 Pirate Place. The concert begins at 6:30 p.m. and is free to the public.

*Friday and Saturday, December 18 and 19- Live Nativity Scene- North Charlestown Church of God located at 1803 Edgewood Drive. The event is free and open to the public.

*Friday, December 18- Charlestown Independent Church Youth Program will be held in Greenway Park at 6 p.m.

*Saturday, December 19- Charlestown High School Choir, Scaliwags, will perform in Greenway Park at 6 p.m.

*Also there will be Carriage Rides, Santa Shop and Concession Stand open in Greenway Park.

*Saturday, December 19- Pajama and Undergarment Giveaway-Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, 301 Gospel Road. For more information, contact the church at 812-256-3053.

*Tour of Churches- Visit nine of Charlestown's most beautiful churches. The first 200 families will build their own nativity set by collecting a set piece at each church on the tour, creating a new family tradition. The tour will conclude at Charlestown First United Methodist Church, 423 Main Cross Street, where a live nativity scene will be performed. The tour begins at the Arts and Enrichment Center, 999 Water Street from 5:30 to 8 p.m. The event is free.

*Sunday, December 20- Christmas Music Program- North Charlestown Church of God, 1803 Edgewood Drive. 10:45 a.m. Free.

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*Children’s Christmas Program- at Charlestown Independent Church, 9575 State Road 62. The program will begin at 7 p.m. and is free to the public.

If you need more information regarding any of the upcoming holiday events please contact Rhonda Davidson at rhondad@cityofcharlestown.com.

Davidson encourages everyone to join the e-mail list on the city’s website, www.cityofcharlestown.com to be informed of upcoming events.