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NEWS



EJ Boat Launch aerial rendering. Courtesy Image

Master Plan sets the stage for private investment in East Jordan

BY KAREN WALKER

As part of the City of East Jordan's master plan update, consulting firm Beckett & Raeder, Inc., headquartered in Ann Arbor, along with the City Planning Commission held an open house at East Jordan's Civic Center last Thursday to unveil their draft master plan, a document that will help guide the future growth and development of the City. Refinement of the master plan was based on public input and surveys, giving consideration to existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions.

The master plan sets the stage for private investment in East Jordan like new housing and waterfront development. The master plan includes a community history and profile, an overview of existing conditions, goals and strategies, future land use, and an implementation plan.

A key component of the Master Plan is the Zoning Plan. The Zoning Plan is based on the Master Plan recommendations and is intended to identify areas where existing zoning is inconsistent with the objectives and strategies of the Master Plan, as well as guiding development of the Zoning Ordinance.

In March and April 2019, the City invited area residents and employees to participate in a short survey to better understand issues



EJ Community Center Redevelopment Elevation. Courtesy Image

and priorities in the community to help guide development of the master plan. Results of the survey showed respondents feel restaurants, access to water, and shopping opportunities are the top three assets necessary to support a thriving East Jordan. In terms of downtown improvements, a greater variety of uses and enhanced connectivity to the waterfront topped the list.

In a visioning session held last April at East Jordan High School, 10th grade Honors English students provided input on their vision for East Jordan. Several students expressed their desire for a movie theater and other places to congregate, places to shop as well as more activities for teens. When asked if the statement, "I would like to live in East Jordan as a young adult" and "I plan to raise a family here", was true for them, only 10 percent responded in agreement. For the statement, "I think of East Jordan in a

positive way", 45 percent of the students agreed. No further explanation of the students responses were provided at the open house. However, John Iacoangeli, Principal at Beckett & Raeder, felt these findings could be considered a "red flag", warranting further exploration.

Displayed at the open house were conceptual drawings for two City properties designated as priority redevelopment sites; the Community/Civic Center on Main Street and the former Boat Launch area west of the bridge. The designs presented by Beckett & Raeder give potential developers a vision of how the two sites could be repurposed and returned to the tax roll.

Beckett & Raeder's suggestion for the Community Center was to remove the existing building and replace it with two buildings with an open walkway between them to provide access to the public parking lot at the corner of Second

and Esterly streets. The proposed buildings could have retail space on the main floor with housing units above.

For the former boat launch site, the consulting team suggested a commercial building located on the corner of Bridge Street and M-32/Water Street and a cluster of condominiums or other housing units above retail space near the center of the site, keeping a public green space at the water's edge.

The City Planning Commission will review the draft master plan at their next regular meeting scheduled for Jan. 9, 2020, 5:30 p.m. at City Hall. Once the Planning Commission makes their recommendation to the East Jordan City Commission for adoption of the plan, the draft will be available for public review. Residents will have 63 days to comment and provide additional input. For more information, contact City Hall at 231-536-3381.



Children, (and curious adults), can take a peek at a special website; www.noradsanta.org, which features a look at Santa's North Pole Village and updates the progress of Santa and his team of reindeer on Christmas Eve. Logo courtesy of NORAD Public Affairs Office.

NORAD tracks Santa's Christmas Eve journey

BY JIM AKANS

Kids of all ages can enjoy the thrill of following Santa's Christmas Eve journey, and make sure to be safely tucked in before St. Nick reaches their home. This up close look at Santa's progress from the North Pole is made possible by the high-tech tracking capabilities of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). NORAD is a United States and Canada bi-national organization charged with the mission of aerospace warning, aerospace control and maritime warning in the defense of North America.

Tracking Santa's Christmas Eve journey started in 1955 when a local media advertisement directed children to call Santa direct - only the number was misprinted. Instead of reaching Santa, the phone rang through to the Crew Commander on duty at the Continental Air Defense Command Operations Center. Thus began the tradition, which NORAD carried on since it was created in 1958. As technology has developed, NORAD has used satellites, high-powered radar, jet fighters and special Santa cameras to track Santa Claus as he makes his journey around the world.

Today, excited children have a new and improved resource for monitoring Santa's journey to their chimney or doorstep. Children, (and curious adults), can take a peek at a special website; www.noradsanta.org, which features a look at Santa's North Pole Village and updates the progress of Santa and his team of reindeer on Christmas Eve.

The site is already active and features Santa's North Pole Village, which includes a holiday countdown, games, activities, and more. Official NORAD Tracks Santa apps are also available in the Windows, Apple and Google Play stores, so parents and children can countdown the days until Santa's launch on their smart phones and tablets. Tracking opportunities are also offered on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Google+. Santa followers just need to type "@noradsanta" into each search engine to get started.

Now NORAD's main job is to monitor the airspace and maritime area covering the United States and Canada using some very powerful satellite and radar equipment. It's a big and very important responsibility, and NORAD helps to keep us safe on a 24/7 basis. At Christmas time, however, NORAD continues a 61-year tradition of letting us know how Santa is doing with his journey of bringing smiles to the faces of children across the world.

Have a very, merry Christmas!

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TALKING IS TEACHING!

A New Great Start Collaborative & Parent Coalition initiative encourages parents to engage children in everyday moments. Everyday conversations with young children can have the power to boost their brain and vocabulary development through the simple act of talking. That is the premise behind a new initiative known as "Talking is Teaching," which has launched in the communities of the Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District and throughout the state.

"Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing" is a public awareness and action campaign that empowers parents and caregivers with fun and easy ways to improve their babies' and young children's learning, said Maureen Hollocker, Great Start Collaborative Director, which is leading the regional Talking is Teaching effort. In partnership with Michigan's Department of Education and the Great Start Collaborative & Parent Coalitions, Michigan is the first official "Talking is Teaching" state for this national initiative.

Hollocker said that although the campaigns across Michigan will be unique to each community, each will include three core elements:

- Trusted messengers who have established positive, trusting relationships with parents and are conduits of information and tools.
- High-quality materials and tools, such as tote bags filled with tip sheets, baby clothing, books and more.
- Messages in community spaces and local media, ranging from signage in and around public spaces to local radio ads and social media outreach.

"While it may sound simple, we all live busy lives and sometimes are task-oriented rather than conversational with our children," Hollocker said. "Whether you are a parent, caregiver or community member, we all have opportunities to talk with children and this campaign is intended to provide gentle reminders and prompts for conversation."

Numerous studies point to early language exposure being a positive indicator of later developmental growth and achievement. Parents are powerful teachers in their children's lives and they don't have to be early childhood experts to succeed - they need only to talk and connect, Hollocker added.

An important part of the Talking is Teaching initiative includes providing concrete supports for families in their daily lives. This is being carried out in the form of Bath-time/Bedtime Literacy Totes and by partnering with laundromats in Charlevoix, Emmet and northern Antrim



Great Start Parent Coalition parent liaison Jean Faivor is pictured showing a child one of the puppets available for playtime at the Wash Basket in Central Lake. Courtesy photo

counties.

Talking is Teaching Bath-time/Bedtime Literacy Totes are being offered free to parents living in Charlevoix, Emmet and northern Antrim counties with a child younger than one year of age. The tote includes a onesie and bath towel with conversation prompts, a water- and rip-proof book and informational leaflets with tips.

"We want parents of babies to realize that it is never too early to talk, read and sing, and these materials empower them to do this during bath-time and bedtime - both opportunities for building a parent-child bond," Hollocker said. (The full contents of the tote can be viewed on the Great Start Collaborative website along with a request link: www.GreatStart-ForKids.com).

Hollocker said laundromats are a natural partner in launching the campaign, "because they are part of many

young families' routines, with an average of 2.5 hours spent during each visit." The Great Start Parent Coalition (GSPC) is seeking to change "doing the laundry" from a tedious routine to a fun and educational opportunity instead, she added.

Over the past few years, the GSPC and partners including the Child Abuse Prevention and Education Council (CAPE) have held "Love of Laundry" events at laundromats. These events support families with free coin laundry, healthy snacks, and crafts for children while connecting families with local resources. Looking to expand this concept, and thanks to grant funds from the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative, the GSPC is now working to create Talking is Teaching Literacy Stations at all local laundromats.

"This initiative is about meeting parents in the every-

day spaces where they go with their children, honoring them as their child's first and most important teacher and creating literacy-rich environments that set parents and children up for success" said Great Start Parent Liaison, Jean Faivor.

The GSPC has commitments from three of seven local laundromats and is working to secure more. "We cut the ribbon on Central Lake's Wash Basket laundromat on Dec. 5 and we hope to have East Jordan's Laundry Station and Alanson's Laundry Center set up in early January 2020. Our funds must be expended by the end of February, so we are hoping other laundromats will see the value and jump on board to let us install a Talking is Teaching Literacy Station at their business," Faivor said.

The Great Start Collaborative leaders noted that the concept of combining laun-

dry and literacy is not new and has been tested across the country. A couple key findings include:

- Children were observed engaging in 30 times more literacy activities in laundromats that include the "Laundry & Literacy" kits compared to laundromats that did not.

- Customers reported high praise for the literacy stations and felt greater loyalty to the laundromat.

"Even for our laundromats that already have a children's 'play area,' with this grant we have the opportunity to transform the space into a robust Talking is Teaching Literacy Station with high-quality materials designed to create a playful, literacy-rich space for young children and families," said Hollocker. "We are excited to see this develop and blossom with use by our families throughout Northern Michigan."

The Great Start Talking is Teaching Bath-time/Bedtime Literacy Totes and Laundromat Talking is Teaching sites in Charlevoix, Emmet & northern Antrim Counties are currently supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0002, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



A peek at what is inside of the literacy totes, available for free to parents throughout the Char-Em ISD region with children under age one. Courtesy photo

Boyer City Superintendent Pat Little Receives a "Highly Effective" Rating



Boyer City Schools Superintendent Pat Little. File photo

The Boyer City Board of Education produced the following statement regarding Pat Little's superintendent yearly evaluation.

The Boyer City School Board held Superintendent Pat Little's evaluation at their regular meeting on Monday, December 9th. The Board unanimously agreed on a "Highly Effective" rating for the four-year employee of the district. This is the third consecutive "Highly Effective" rating for Superintendent Little. "Pat Little's heavy educational experience and motivation for strong academic perform-

ance in all grades focus on our District and the educators on excellence," says Zareena Koch, Board Secretary.

Pat's vision for our District encompasses every child. New initiatives have paid off big for students, such as educational/emotional evaluation for preschoolers to determine progress and program success. This has proven to be an excellent example of his commitment to Boyer City's youngest citizens. Ross McLane, Board Treasurer, described Little as being a "highly professional" leader of our District. Little continues to work closely with the community he serves. "Pat Little is a dedicated and hardworking employee for our District," says Jeff Mercer, Board Vice President. The Board looks forward to working with Little to further the educational opportunities for all students.

Leadership travel opportunity for High School Students

High school sophomores and juniors whose parents or guardians are Great Lakes Energy members are invited to take part in a once-in-a-lifetime leadership travel opportunity in June 2020. From the battlefields of Gettysburg, to the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C., the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour will explore leadership lessons from our nation's history and immerse participants in the cooperative spirit.

Those selected to attend Youth Tour will meet in Portland, MI for orientation, then board a motor coach bound for Washington, D.C. There, they will join other Youth Tour high school students from all over the USA. The Michigan group will make stops to tour the Civil War battlefields in Gettysburg, PA, and Fort McHenry in Baltimore, MD—birthplace of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Students will engage in brief lectures with a tour guide at various Washington, D.C. monuments and memorials, and explore several museums of the Smithsonian Institution. They will witness the time-honored changing of the guard ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery,

have a unique opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues with several Michigan Senators and Congressmen on Capitol Hill, and enjoy an evening at a Washington Nationals baseball game.

"Electric co-ops have been sponsoring Youth Tour for over 50 years," says Great Lakes Energy program coordinator Linda Kotzian. "And every year, students returning from Washington, D.C. tell us that the friendships they made and all they experienced together on Youth Tour were life-changing."

Great Lakes Energy is a not-for-profit, member-owned electric cooperative utility serving 26 counties throughout western and lower northern Michigan. The co-op sponsors students selected to attend Youth Tour as part of the its ongoing commitment to power communities and improve quality of life for members and their children.

The event takes place June 20-25, 2020. More information and the online application are available at CooperativeYouthTour.com. Applications must be received by Feb. 28 for consideration.

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Taylor Malpass named East Jordan DDA Coordinator

Taylor Malpass will be joining the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) team serving as the East Jordan Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Coordinator. In that role she will work closely with the City of East Jordan and DDA Board of Directors to implement the many exciting projects and initiatives in the DDA annual work plan. Taylor will begin her duties on January 6, 2020.

"It's great partnering with the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance for this service. We are excited to welcome Taylor to East Jordan and the DDA," said Tom Cannon, East Jordan City Manager. "We were very impressed during the interview process. The NLEA received several good applications; however Taylor's experience, personality and commitment to our community really stood out."

"Taylor will be a great addition to the team and I've enjoyed getting to know her. She's committed to the area and the East Jordan community. East Jordan has some exciting opportunities ahead and Taylor's experience and enthusiasm will be perfect," stated Andy Hayes, NLEA President.

Taylor grew up in Southern California and graduated from California State University Fullerton with a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and a Master's in Public Administration. Taylor



Taylor Malpass will be joining the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance (NLEA) team serving as the East Jordan Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Coordinator. Courtesy photo

spent six years working for Orange County beginning her career in the County Treasurer-Tax Collectors office, then transitioning to Public Works where she served as the Administrative Policy Manager. She was responsible for ensuring all contracts and policy-related items abided by

state and federal government code, as well as met all County requirements. She was the liaison for Public Works with the Board of Supervisors and other county departments working with appointed and elected officials on project and contractual matters. In 2018, she moved to East Jordan, where

she and her husband enjoy being active with their family and friends.

Taylor volunteers as a Board member for Communities in Schools and owns Iron Goat Coffee in downtown East Jordan. After obtaining her degrees and working for a large county, Taylor developed a broad understanding of municipal government. Her experience with large-scale projects combined with her desire to build meaningful relationships will bring new perspectives to the DDA and will help guide her in this new endeavor as she seeks to leverage her past experiences, while effectively meeting the needs of the community she lives in and cares about.

In talking with her several references there was a common theme about how capable, personable, and professional Taylor is. Some comments included:

"She is one of the most phenomenal people I know."

"Is an asset to any community or organization."

"Wow!... Lucky you! Congrats to you all for hiring her!"

"She wore many hats, is a great role model and mentor. I learned a lot from her."

"She can relate to and communicate with people of all positions and backgrounds, very personable and professional."

Congratulations to Taylor Malpass!

East Jordan is financially healthy according to audit

BY KAREN WALKER

In a presentation to East Jordan City Commissioners at their regular meeting Tuesday, Dec. 17th Doug Welton from the Kincheloe based accounting firm Anderson, Tackman & Company reviewed the City's financial audit for the 2018/2019 fiscal year. With a total net position of over than \$14 million, the audit indicates that the City of East Jordan is financially healthy. Net position is determined by taking all the City's assets and subtracting all the City's liabilities. East Jordan's net position increased by about \$1.7 million

over fiscal year 2017/2018.

In a five year analysis of the City's general fund balance, the primary operating fund for the City, Mr. Welton explained the City's fund balance has had a steadily increasing trend. At the end of the 2018/2019 fiscal year, the City's fund balance was \$328,705 compared to \$234,876 at the end of the 2014/2015 fiscal year.

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m., Tuesday, January 21, 2020. The meeting scheduled for January 7th has been cancelled.



EJ Lions Club donates to Care & Share food pantry

East Jordan Lions Club held their annual Christmas Dinner and live action at the Jordan Inn December 2nd. Lions Club members and special guests raised \$1,500 in the auction which was donated to the East Jordan Care & Share Food Pantry. Pictured are Sherry Pursel, Lions Club Treasurer and Kathy Reed, Executive Director of the Care & Share Food Pantry. Courtesy photo



Boyne Falls Public Schools STUDENT OF THE WEEK



Alexis Loudner

Grade: 3rd

Parent's Name(s): Danielle and Jacob Ormsbee

What do you want to be when you grow up?: Lexi wants to be a police officer when she grows up, so she can save the world!

Favorite Book: Lexi likes to read the Dogman series. She just finished reading Dogman Unleashed.

Hobbies and Interests: She enjoys ice skating, playing with hamsters, building things with Legos, and playing basketball.

School Activities: In school, Lexi's favorite subject is reading. She also enjoys gym class. Lexi participates in the grade school basketball program as well.

Staff Comments: Lexi has been a great addition to our 3rd grade classroom and the Boyne Falls School Family! She always follows the Logger Agreement. She is kind to everyone and always gives her best effort in all subjects. Lexi has a great future in our school. We can't wait to see everything she accomplishes. You make us proud, Lexi, keep up the great work!

Submitted By: Mrs. Meier

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BOYNE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT INCIDENT REPORT

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2

1109 Citizen assist in the 500 block of S Park St.
1440 Report of lost iPhone
1632 Retail Fraud in the 400 block of N Lake St. Located and arrested suspect.
1733 Juvenile complaint on Smith St.
2256 Arrested subject for Domestic Assault in the 500 block of Hannah St.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3

0530 Report of a Facebook post that seemed concerning.
0949 Vehicle unlock in the 400 block of N Lake St
1238 Motor Vehicle inspection.
1500 Suspicious situation reported in the 1000 block of Boyne Av

1748 Assist Sheriff Dept. with an alarm activation on M-75 S.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

0800 Property damage crash at Boyne Ave. and Brockway St.
1210 Vehicle unlock in the 1300 block of Boyne Av
1444 Report of possible violation of no contact order on Hannah St.
1512 Suspicious subjects in the 1000 block of Boyne Av
2027 Civil complaint reported at the Police Dept.
2102 Vehicle unlock in the 100 block of E Water St.
2217 Fraudulent activity reported from Jefferson St.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

0641 Alarm in the 200 block of S Lake St

1116 911 hang up in the 900 block of Brockway St.
1550 Request for civil standby on Hannah St.
2109 Vehicle unlock in the 400 block of N Lake St.
2309 Alarm in the 700 block of Front St.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

0055 Assist EMS in the 400 block of North St.
1040 Report of vehicles parking on the street overnight at the west end of Elm St
2001 Suspicious activity on W Main St
2210 Assist Sheriff Dept. with vehicle in ditch on M75 N and Old 75 Loop.
2222 Vehicle unlock in the 200 block of S Lake St

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

1128 Parking complaint

at the high school.
1302 Civil standby requested on Hannah St.
1407 Civil standby requested on Hannah St.
2120 Assist Sheriff Dept. in Walloon.
2144 Juvenile complaint on Smith St.
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8
0312 Assist MSP with traffic stop at Pleasant Ave and Trent St.
1115 Foot patrol in the central business district.
1605 Report of a possible intoxicated driver on M75 S coming in to the city Unable to locate.
2159 PPO violation reported from Smith St.

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SUPER SANTA!

BY JIM AKANS

Santa Claus is truly an amazing fellow. Visiting an estimated 400 million eager children across the globe who celebrate the Christmas holiday, Santa has his work cut out for him during the eve of the big day. Yet for centuries Kris Kringle, St. Nicholas, Father Christmas or simply, Santa Claus, has successfully filled the stockings and stuffed presents under the trees of all good girls and boys during one very long night.



WIKIMEDIA PHOTO.

Here are some “fascinating facts” about just how incredible Santa’s Christmas Eve journey is. While these are estimated guesses, you’ll get the idea:

- With about 2 billion children in the world, and estimating 15-percent of those celebrating Christmas, Santa visits nearly 380 million children, or, at about 3.5 kids per household; over 100 million homes.

- His approximately 31 hour trip (time zone changes extend his work hours a bit), there are about 900 visits per second. This works out to one-thousandth of a second per household. No wonder children who stay up late never seem to catch him visiting their house.

- Santa’s sleigh moves very quickly. Using some very rough math (even the experts don’t know exactly how Santa does this) the journey covers around 75 million miles. That puts that reindeer propelled craft at a whopping speed of 650 miles per second. Rock on Rudolph!

- Let’s talk cargo. Put-

ting each gift at an average of two pounds (what the heck), we are looking at 380 tons of gleaming, glittering toys and stocking stuffers packed for the trip. Mary Poppins’ magic travel bag has nothing on this!

And of course there is the milk and cookie diet Santa craves. Let’s go back to that 900 visits per second estimate. Santa never seems to drink all the milk or eat all of the cookies at each home...he really doesn’t have the time. We’ll give him two ounces of milk and one-quarter of a cookie at each stop. My calculation puts his milk consumption at around 28 gallons per second. We’ll just call it a LOT of cookies.

As I mentioned above, the arithmetic is all relative here. There are years when there are more good children to visit, seasons when the popular gift weighs a bit more or less, pit stops along the way (don’t forget he drinks tons of milk)...but the bottom line is clear; Santa is a super duper kind of guy.

Celebrate the Christmas Spirit

BY JIM AKANS

When Andy Williams voice rings out the lines of the Christmas classic, “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year,” there is no mistaking the heartfelt joy and elation he feels embracing the Christmas spirit. As with many holiday song and movie classics; the words, sentiments and message invigorates the spirit and kindles those feelings that it’s okay to share a smile, a laugh, hold open a door for a stranger, and extend those simple gestures of kindness.

The Christmas spirit is a testament that even amid the fast-paced, electronic networking, media centered era we live in there remains a collective longing for the fellowship, compassion and love the Christmas season brings to light every December. For a while it’s okay to look up from that phone or tablet and experience a world that focuses on giving to others. It’s a time to appreciate community in what’s become a much too global world.

For that’s what the spirit of Christmas is about. It is a celebration of the birth and love of Jesus Christ. A time for reflection, gathering together with friends and loved ones, giving from the heart and reveling in the excitement of see-



Celebrate the Christmas spirit! Wikipedia Commons file.

ing others receive. It is about hugs, stories and remembrances, comforting hearts and sharing dreams.

It is most certainly about the children who sense the Christmas spirit on a whole different level. There is simply no joy grander than seeing the beaming faces of children on Christmas morning. They see grown-ups also regain a sparkle in their eyes.

The Christmas spirit can also be felt where people

gather together for parades, tree lighting ceremonies, Main Street celebrations, holiday concerts and plays, in churches and at candlelight services. The message is clear; love and cherish one another regardless of our differences.

Celebrate the Christmas spirit. We all share this earthly real estate and at Christmas we are reminded that we travel spaceship Earth together, so let’s enjoy the

journey. Take to heart that this truly is “the hap-happiest season of all.”

“Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.” Norman Vincent Peale

“One of the most glorious messes in the world is the mess created in the living room on Christmas Day. Don’t clean it up too quickly.” Andy Rooney
Merry Christmas!

CHRISTMAS FUN FACTS

Why is Jesus’ birth celebrated on December 25?

Son of God was born in Bethlehem but probably in spring or fall

There are some famous people who are born on Christmas day, including Sir Isaac Newton in the year 1642, the actor Humphrey Bogart (1899), Rod Serling (1924), Jimmy Buffett (1946) and a pair of NFL Hall of Famers, Ken “Snake” Stabler (1945) and Larry Csonka (1946).

But there is one person we can definitively say was not born on December 25 and that is Jesus. How do we know this? Because the clues we’re given in the gospels indicate that Jesus would likely have been born in spring or fall because that is when shepherds were in the field watching their flocks by night.

So how is that we celebrate the birth of the Son of God on the 25th of December each year? In the year 335 A.D. that Dec. 25 date was chosen by the Roman Emperor Constantine because on the same day the pagan festival Saturnalia was celebrated revolving around the Winter Solstice and the “birth” of a new year. The date for the birth of Jesus caught on and that is how Christians around the world began to celebrate the birth of the Savior on Dec. 25.

Another interesting fact about Christmas is that there really was a Saint Nicholas. He was the Fourth Century Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor (present day Turkey), a godly man known for his charity and good deeds, particularly to children.

According to legend, there was a widower in Myra who

had three daughters for whom he could not provide a dowry. The story goes that Saint Nicholas surreptitiously threw three bags of gold into the fireplace chimney one Christmas Eve and the gold landed into the stockings drying by the fire. Thus began the tradition of putting presents into Christmas stockings. (And, of course, for Christians around the world the giving of gifts each December reflects the manner in which the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, came into the world and gave Himself as redeemer for the sins of mankind.)

Here are some other interesting facts and trivia about Christmas:

- The traditional three colors of Christmas are green, red, and gold. Green has long been a symbol of life and rebirth; red symbolizes the

blood of Christ, and gold represents light as well as wealth and royalty, represents Christ. The “two turtles” represent the Old and New Testaments.

- Although many believe the Friday after Thanksgiving is the busiest shopping day of the year, it is not. It is the fifth to tenth busiest day. The Friday and Saturday before Christmas are the two busiest shopping days of the year.

- According to the Guinness world records, the tallest Christmas tree ever cut was a 221-foot Douglas fir that was displayed in 1950 at the Northgate Shopping Center in Seattle, Washington.

- When “A Charlie Brown Christmas” first aired on December 9, 1965, executives at CBS thought it would be a disaster. There was a battle pitched to remove the quotation of the Bible by Linus from the animation but Charles Schulz, the creator of the comic strip, was adamant that it remained because the whole theme of the program was the real meaning of Christmas. Schulz won out, happily, and the cartoon became an instant hit, still shown every December more than five decades later.

- Other popular Christmas specials that have stood the test of time include How the

Grinch Stole Christmas; Santa Claus is Coming to Town; Frosty the Snowman; and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

- In 1843, Charles Dickens wrote “A Christmas Carol” in just six weeks.

- Christmas trees have been sold in the U.S. since 1850.

- Christmas trees usually grow for about 15 years before they are sold.

- Christmas became a national holiday in America on June, 26, 1870.

- Each year more than 3 billion Christmas cards are sent in the U.S. alone.

- All the gifts in the Twelve Days of Christmas would equal 364 gifts.

- The word Christmas is from Old English, a contraction of Christ’s Mass

- The first president to have a Christmas tree in the White House was Franklin Pierce.

- Rudolph” was actually created by Montgomery Ward in the late 1930s for a holiday promotion. The rest is history.

- “Jingle Bells” was first written for Thanksgiving and then became one of the most popular Christmas songs.

- More diamonds are sold around Christmas than any other time of the year.

—Compiled by Mike Dunn

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