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ON THE COVER: Photo by Meredith Winter

Siblings Leni and Joe Sells are ready for all of the merriment the holiday season will bring.

Publishers
Dianna Lancione
Lonnie Lancione

V.P., Business Development
Jonathan Katz

Editor
Meredith Winter

Assistant Editor
Laura Ascione

Sports Editor
David Bashore

Sales Account Executive
Larry Sells

Graphic Designer
Will Nauman

Reporter
Lauren Cowin

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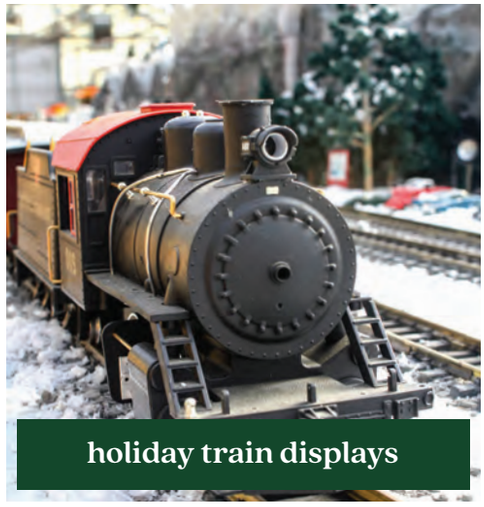
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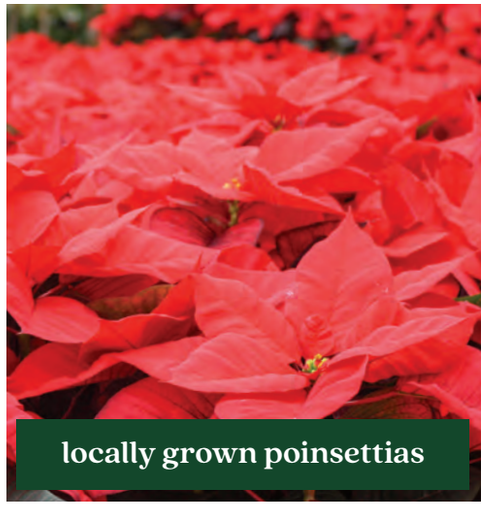
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Santa Shops Local: Area Store Owners Share Their Favorite Gifts

By Laura Ascione

When it comes to holiday shopping, who better to offer gift-giving inspiration than the people who know their products best? Local shop owners and managers spend their days helping customers find the perfect presents for family and friends, but what would they choose if they were shopping for the special people in their own lives?

From longtime customer favorites to hidden gems and personal picks, these staff-selected gifts offer a little inspiration for anyone looking to check a few names off their holiday shopping list while supporting the small businesses that make the community special.and some classic candy cane candies and chocolate.

Franklin's Toys

Franklin's Toys in Severna Park brings holiday magic to life for the young and young at heart with a playful selection of toys, games, puzzles and creative gifts. From



educational activities to imaginative play favorites, the locally owned toy store offers plenty of ways to spark joy and wonder this holiday season.

An axolotl Warmies, filled with dried French lavender and weighted with flaxseed, offers comfort and can be microwaved or cooled in the freezer to promote relaxation and calming. A Thames and Kosmos V8 Race Car kit lets STEM-minded kids create a vehicle with a working 4-speed transmission and a visible V8 engine. Much-loved favorites like squishies, Jellycat plush animals, Corolle baby dolls and Dog Man books round out a list of solid gift-giving ideas. Holiday-themed toys and books, such as Santa plushies and Christmas books, are guaranteed to make children stay in the holiday spirit.

Sanders Diamond Jewelers



For gifts that sparkle long after the holidays have passed, Sanders Diamond Jewelers in Pasadena offers an array of fine jewelry, diamonds and timeless treasures to help shoppers celebrate the special people in their lives.

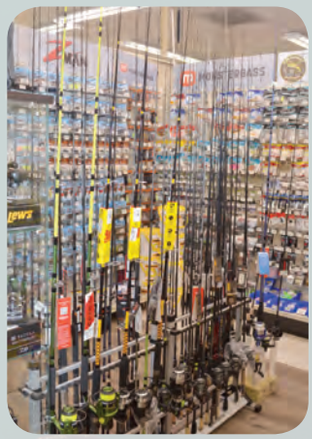
An oval tanzanite brings a rich blue-violet accent to a gold and platinum pendant, complemented by natural round diamonds.

A genuine emerald-cut sapphire anchors a two-tone pendant crafted in 14-karat gold and platinum. Natural round diamonds add sparkle against the sapphire's clean lines.

A contemporary 18-karat yellow gold ring pairs fancy-shaped natural diamonds with two pear-shaped natural diamonds. The mix of shapes gives the ring a modern look.

Clean lines define a platinum ring with natural emerald-cut diamonds in a shared-prong setting.

Park Hardware



For the DIY enthusiasts, home improvement lovers and handy people, Park Hardware in Severna Park offers a wide selection of tools, gadgets, grilling accessories, home decor and other practical lifestyle gifts.

Fishing gear for beginners and more experienced fish enthusiasts includes Lew's Speed Spin Combo rods, Zebco Big Cat spinning combo rods and Ugly Stik Bigwater fishing rods.

Canvas tote bags, including a blue crab tote from ANNGOTI and a POL Clothing ivory and denim checker woven tote bag, are thoughtful choices for anyone who loves coastal themes.

Pillows and pillow covers, including a white coral pillow cover from Porter Lane Home, elevate home decor and can easily give rooms an updated look.

Don't forget four-legged friends, either. Sturdy dog leashes, comfortable pet beds and a variety of treats are great pet stocking stuffers.

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The Sugar Shoppe



Make the holidays a little sweeter with a visit to The Sugar Shoppe in Severna Park, where nostalgic candies, festive treats, playful gifts and colorful stocking stuffers bring a little extra joy to the season.

A festive gift collection for spa lovers includes mini shower steamer poppers, peppermint and rosemary shower steamers, Spongelle candy cane foot treatments and some classic candy cane candies and chocolate.

An elf-themed sensory dough kit, a beauty play kit, and a vintage American car carved out of beechwood are perfect picks for children who prefer imaginative play.

State- and town-themed notepads, nautical tea towels, insulated sailboat tumblers and a pack of gummy candy come together in a nautical gift with a local feel.

BD Provisions

For food lovers, home cooks and hard-to-shop-for people on holiday lists, BD Provisions in Severna Park offers a delicious assortment of gourmet treats, freshly roasted coffee, specialty spices and other unique finds that make gift-giving a little more flavorful.

Craft cocktail mixes paired with spirits purchased from Fishpaws Marketplace make excellent gifts for neighbors, friends and family members. After a stop at Fishpaws, combine a preferred spirit in a Bloody Mary, espresso martini, blood orange Mai Tai, old fashioned or strawberry mule cocktail kit.

Gourmet spice packs are a perfect choice for those who enjoy cooking and hosting. A gourmet grilling spice pack includes a spicy rub, a midnight Joe coffee rub, and a barbecue dry rub. Applewood smoked salt, sea salt and fine Himalayan pink salt are packaged in the Gourmet Salt Spice Kit.



The Blended Essentials

Give the gift of relaxation, creativity and a little indulgence this holiday season with The Blended Essentials in Severna Park, where handcrafted candles, soaps and bath products — along with experience-based gifts that let recipients create their own products — offer something special for everyone.



Shower Blast packs are similar to bath bombs for the shower and add a burst of scent to the shower. Blended Essentials' signature shower gel, available in a variety of scents, cleanses and nourishes skin with a blend of aloe, argan oil, coconut and avocado oil. Signature fragrance spray gives rooms a fresh boost with just a few sprays. Foaming hand soap can be customized with a favorite fragrance or used as is. Classic bar soap with a coconut oil base contains a mixture of sunflower seed oil, safflower seed oil, sesame seed oil, jojoba seed oil and olive oil, along with vitamins E and A.

The Cottage

From trendy clothing and stylish accessories to jewelry, home decor and thoughtful little treasures, The Cottage in Severna Park is a one-stop destination for finding gifts that reflect different personalities and interests.

Bring the magic of Christmas home with Thymes Frasier Fir. From candles to home fragrances, this iconic scent makes every space feel like the holidays.



Jellycat plush toys and characters are the sweetest gifts for everyone on a holiday list. Cuddly classics and whimsical holiday favorites bring smiles to all ages.

Give a little sparkle this holiday season with enewton's effortless jewelry that's perfect for gifting, stacking and wearing every day.

Searching for holiday gifts and decor? Make the season merry and bright with festive finds throughout the store, including beautiful holiday decor and thoughtful gifts. ■







Holiday Hosting Made Simple

Community Experts Share Creative Tips For Hosting The Perfect Holiday Gathering

By Meredith Winter

Cleaning, decorating, shopping, cooking, cleaning again — hosting family and friends for the holidays can be stressful, but it doesn't have to be. If you're short on time or creative ideas, a few folks around town are here to help you out. Six business owners have offered their expertise on holiday hosting, from readying your home to preparing a Michelin-star worthy meal —without a lot of fuss.

Tidy Up Without Tiring Out

The first step to hosting a holiday gathering can be the most daunting, but getting your home ready doesn't have to be overwhelming. Kelly Baldwin and Ashley Johnson, owners of Tidy Nest Professional Organizing, have a few recommendations for keeping it simple.

Their biggest tip? Make room for what matters. Think about how you will use your home during the holidays and where a little extra room would make the greatest difference. That could mean clearing kitchen counters, making room at the dining table, or creating space for guests' belongings. Simple changes can make your home feel more open and welcoming, Baldwin and Johnson shared.

And, you don't have to clean your home from top to bottom. Focus on the spaces that guests will see and use: Make room for coats, shoes and bags in the entryway; keep frequently used dishes and utensils easily accessible; provide fresh towels in the guest bathroom and stock soap, toilet paper and other essentials; and remove unnecessary items from living and dining areas.

Baldwin and Johnson suggest following a one-touch rule: When you pick something up, put it where it belongs rather than moving it from place to place.

And if guests will be staying the night, the best way to help them feel at home is simply to think like a guest: Make essentials easy to find and create space in drawers and closets. A self-serve beverage station can be a special touch, too.

Deck The Halls

Once you've optimized your space, you can add festive touches that bring holiday cheer. Patricia Cowan, creative coordinator at Homestead Gardens, offered simple tips for selecting a color palette and incorporating plants into your décor.

In addition to a Christmas tree, a tablescape interspersed with plants can create a focal point in your home. Cowan recommended selecting a theme first — rustic, traditional, blue and white, or nature's holiday, for example — and bringing the beauty of your garden indoors. She likes to use fresh evergreens, magnolia leaves, winterberries, holly, candles, lanterns, runners and more in her tablescapes.

You can also find a spot in your home to create a vignette with plants. Amaryllis adds a pop of color, and paperwhites lend elegance. Poinsettias can be beautiful, too, but be careful if you have pets in the home.

Decorating with plants can be a fun way to engage kids. Cowan shared that she used to take her grandchildren on foraging trips in the woods,



where they gathered holly, pine, spruce and berries to incorporate in their decorations.

Your holiday décor can be unified with a color palette. If your home is neutral, Cowan said, almost any combination of colors will work. Some prefer traditional red and green, while others opt for a bold purple and gold combination. Pick up colors that run through your spaces to accent what you already have.

Conserve Energy With Casual Dining

Kristine McAllister and Jenn Carlsson, the duo behind The Sisters Supper Club, have a unique recommendation for avoiding overwhelm when hosting a holiday meal.

"One of my favorite family traditions is skipping the formal sit-down dinner and gathering in the kitchen over a variety of appetizers and small plates," McAllister said. "It's relaxed, fun, and everyone gets to try a little bit of everything."

She added that dessert and coffee can be the sit-down part of an evening together.

The sisters shared some of their favorite small plates to prep and enjoy at the holidays: crab balls with lemon aioli, baked brie, grilled oysters, shrimp and artichoke dip, roasted carrots with whipped feta, and Swedish meatballs. They recommend classic desserts including pineapple upside-down cake and baked Alaska.

"I think the best holiday gatherings are less about an elaborate meal and more about the memories made around it," McAllister emphasized. "Good food has a way of bringing everyone together, and sometimes the simplest gatherings are the most memorable."

Showcase Your Culinary Chops

If investing time in the kitchen to put a picture-perfect meal on your table is more your style, Jeremy Allen Sr., owner of Elephant in the Room, has a few tips for elevating meals at home without earning a degree from a culinary school.

Small finishing touches can make a big difference, Allen shared. He recommends adding roasted garlic and brown butter to mashed potatoes; giving cranberry sauce more depth with orange zest, ginger or a little pepper jelly; finishing macaroni and cheese with smoked Gouda and a crisp, seasoned breadcrumb topping; or adding fresh herbs and sautéed onions to cornbread dressing.

> *"I think the best holiday gatherings are less about an elaborate meal and more about the memories made around it."*
>
> **— Kristine McAllister, The Sisters Supper Club**

Serving something familiar but with an unexpected detail — like a sweet potato dish finished with a crunchy pecan topping and a little sea salt — is another way to wow guests. For a family that enjoys bold flavor, jerk-seasoned turkey can be a hit. Crab and corn chowder as a starter can bring a taste of Maryland to your holiday table.

"You don't have to reinvent the entire holiday meal," Allen said. "My advice is to pick one or two dishes to be the stars. When you try to make everything spectacular, hosting becomes stressful. Guests remember how the food made them feel — and whether you had time to sit down and enjoy it with them."

Make Main Courses Shine

One detail that can make a meal unforgettable is a standout main course. James and Judy Sanders anticipate opening The New York Butcher Shoppe of Severna Park in December, and they have recommendations for selecting the perfect main course for your holiday dinners.

The Sanders suggest factoring in your number of guests, cooking comfort level, prep time, oven space and dietary restrictions.

"When we think of holiday meals, our family has leaned toward turkey, prime rib or even a beef tenderloin for a smaller gathering, although smoked brisket has recently started to gain favor with Judy and the boys," James shared. He added that a prime rib roast may be a splurge, but it's a guaranteed showstopper that will make the occasion feel special.

Having enough to go around is a critical element of hosting a great meal. The Sanders said a good rule of thumb when purchasing a main course is aiming for a precooked weight of half to three-quarters of a pound per person for boneless cuts like tenderloin, one pound per person for bone-in roasts like prime rib, and one to one-and-a-half pounds per person for a whole turkey.

Once you've selected your main dish, build your menu around it with complementary sides. Rich cuts pair with bright or tangy dishes like creamed spinach or roasted vegetables. Turkey pairs well with traditional, richer sides like stuffing and gravy.

And of course, quality ingredients matter when planning a memorable meal. The Sanders recommend Choice or Prime Certified Angus Beef and free-range, all-natural turkeys.

Make Beverages A Thoughtful Pairing

Great food and quality time with friends and family often call for the perfect beverages to go with them. Nick Cipriano, owner of Dawson's Liquors, shared about simple pairings, purchasing the right quantity, and tips for incorporating wine and liquor into a holiday menu.

If you're hosting a holiday gathering and don't know how much beer, wine or liquor to buy, Cipriano offered a simple formula: How many people will attend multiplied by how long the event is. So, if you're hosting 10 people for two hours, aim for about 20 drinks. This number will vary based on whether people are staying the night, driving home, and other factors.

Wine revolves around the food served, Cipriano said, noting that people often select soft reds like Pinot Noir and Beaujolais because they won't overpower turkey. Aromatic white wines including Riesling and Gewurztraminer are popular Thanksgiving choices as well.

A little Cabernet Sauvignon cooked into the gravy can elevate prime rib, and desserts are great dishes to add cordials like pumpkin cream liqueur and Kahlua. Martinis are easy drinks to serve after a holiday meal, such as a cranberry martini garnished with fresh cranberries and mint leaves for some Christmas color. ■





Not Home For The Holidays:

By Laura Ascione

For many families, the holidays mean gathering around the dinner table, exchanging gifts and spending time with loved ones. But while much of the community celebrates at home, essential workers are answering emergency calls, caring for patients and making sure help is available when it's needed most.

For three local residents who regularly give up some of their holiday time to serve others, those sacrifices come with a sense of purpose, camaraderie and gratitude.

Answering the Call, Even on Holidays

As a volunteer ambulance technician with the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company, Joanne Stableford understands that emergencies don't take holidays off.

Although career personnel staff the station around the clock, volunteers like Stableford provide essential support, helping ensure that emergency services are available when community members need them.

"I don't think anyone chooses when they're going to have their worst day," Stableford said. "I think that's inherently the nature of emergency response."

Last year, rather than serving on an emergency crew on Thanksgiving or Christmas, Stableford helped make the holidays a little easier for the career personnel on duty. She purchased groceries ahead of time and helped ensure that those working could enjoy holiday meals without having to worry about shopping or preparing food between calls.

Being able to provide a meal is one way volunteers can look after those who are looking after everyone else, Stableford said.

The holidays also bring opportunities for camaraderie among emergency personnel. Some neighboring stations gather for meals, while individual shifts often plan special lunches or dinners to celebrate together.

"You don't have to be a firefighter in order to help contribute to your community," she said.

She encourages residents to check on neighbors, stay connected with others and consider volunteering.

"It can be a tough time for people, but also a really



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Finding Meaning In Serving Others



great time to come together," she said.

Finding Joy in a Different Kind of Tradition

For Leslie Richards, a Severna Park resident and registered nurse in the emergency department at Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center, working during the holidays is simply part of a profession that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The hospital uses a rotating holiday schedule, dividing staff into two groups that alternate holiday assignments each year. That means nurses can anticipate which holidays they'll be working and plan family celebrations accordingly.

This year, Richards' assigned holidays include Thanksgiving and New Year's. Next year, she'll have those holidays off but will be responsible for Christmas and other designated holidays.

This Thanksgiving, Richards and her husband, Nick, will host their family's celebration. There's just one complication: Richards is scheduled to work until 3 a.m. the night before.

Preparing a Thanksgiving meal after an overnight shift might sound daunting, but Richards sees it as another challenge to navigate.

"We are doers," she said of nurses. "We are people who want to get things accomplished and meet the need under any kind of circumstances."

She remembers her first Christmas working in the emergency department, when a lighter patient volume created opportunities to spend more time talking with patients and getting to know them.

"Sometimes the holidays can bring about more of a chance for some kind of connection with your patients," she said.

She has also noticed a particular sense of gratitude from patients and their families during the holidays. Community members sometimes drop off handwritten thank-you notes, bagels, donuts and other treats for hospital staff. Those gestures, however small, can mean a great deal to people spending the holidays at work.

Within the emergency department, Richards said, coworkers also look out for one another.

Although holiday assignments are established in advance, staff members often trade shifts to accommodate family celebrations, travel or other commitments.

"It's part of the culture of knowing that this is a 24-hour job," she said.

For Richards, the holidays are another opportunity to serve others while finding creative ways to preserve the traditions that matter most at home.

When Thanksgiving Dinner Has to W ait

For Dr. Matt Heavner, a urologist with Anne Arundel Urology, being home for the holidays doesn't necessarily mean staying home.

Unlike some medical professionals who work scheduled hospital shifts, Heavner takes calls from home. When he's on call, he is responsible for responding to emergencies at the hospitals his practice serves, including Luminis Health Anne Arundel Medical Center and University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center.

Heavner, who lives in Severna Park with his wife and their two daughters, has learned that flexibility is essential.

Last Thanksgiving, when he was on call, his family planned a late lunch in hopes that he would be able to join them. But just as the meal was coming together, Heavner received a call about a patient who needed emergency surgery.

The family's late lunch became dinner instead.

"Everyone's got to be light on their feet," Heavner said. "We try to stay flexible, and our girls are great. They know the drill at this point."

Rather than promise his daughters that he'll be home for a particular meal or celebration, Heavner tries to prepare them for the possibility that plans could change. "There's always a little disappointment, but it helps framing it that way for them and for us," he said.

Heavner finds encouragement in witnessing those on duty pitch in wherever they're needed, creating a shared sense of responsibility.

"Everyone's in it together," he said. "There's a real sense of teamwork when people are pulled away from their families and on call in the hospital, especially over the holidays."

That spirit extends to his own practice. Heavner said colleagues have come into the hospital to help him with difficult cases even when they weren't scheduled to be on call.

"There's a real sense of community within our practice and in the hospitals we cover," he said. "You're showing up for the community and you're helping."

Heavner isn't scheduled to be on call this Thanksgiving or Christmas, and he's looking forward to celebrating with his family. But he knows that other physicians and hospital employees will be stepping away from their own celebrations to care for patients.

And when his turn comes again, he knows his family and colleagues will be there to support him. ■



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Sensory-Friendly Holiday Activities

By Lauren Cowin

The jingling bells, twinkling lights and general hustle and bustle of the holiday season can do a number on a sensitive nervous system.

With a few adaptations, though, fan-favorite holiday events can be made more enjoyable for those merry-makers who need the sensory overload turned down a notch.

Santa Cares

Perhaps the most quintessential core Christmas memory for children and their parents alike is a photo with Santa.

Many parents could likely attest to behind-the-scenes stress in the lead-up to that picture-perfect moment: combing hair, arguments over wardrobe choices, traffic and crowds at the mall. Throw in sensory processing challenges, and this experience could be one that nobody wants to remember.

At both the Annapolis Mall and Arundel Mills, there are dedicated sensory-friendly hours with Santa to alleviate those barriers.

A program called Santa Cares, run by Cherry Hill Programs, is intentionally designed to provide a soothing, calm experience for those visitors who may not otherwise be able to comfortably participate, said Mary Shoemaker, director of marketing for Cherry Hill Programs.

The lights are dimmer, the music is quieter, and these sessions take place earlier in the morning to avoid the mall crowds.

Additionally, employees receive specialized training to ensure they're well-equipped to understand sensory sensitivities, follow guests' cues, and support verbal and non-verbal communication, Shoemaker explained.

"Our goal is to give every family the time, space and flexibility they need to experience the magic of Santa in a way that feels comfortable for them," Shoemaker said.

The Annapolis Mall will host Santa Cares on Sunday, December 6, from 9-10:30 a.m. next to Crate & Barrel.

Arundel Mills will host Santa Cares on Sunday, December 6, from 8:30-10:30 a.m. in the dining pavilion.

Time slots can be reserved at ***www.whereis-santa.com***.

GiGi's Playhouse Butterfly Café & Holiday Market

Shopping for friends and family is another outing that, while well-intentioned, can quickly trigger a stress response.

GiGi's Playhouse Annapolis, a Down syndrome achievement center, is hosting a special holiday shopping event on Thursday, December 10, from 9-11 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.

The GiGi's Playhouse Butterfly Café began as an opportunity for adult participants with Down syndrome to practice the customer service skills they learned during various programs, said Mary Lee Walls, speech-language pathologist and adult career development program director at GiGi's Playhouse Annapolis.



At the December event, one room will be set up like a coffee shop, offering coffee and a variety of teas. Baked goods from Black Market Bakers and The Bakery, a pop-up that offers vegan and gluten-free items, will also be available.

In the adjoining space, a holiday market will offer an array of hand-crafted gift items created and sold by GiGi's participants. Jewelry, soap scrub, framed photography, oyster shell ornaments and journals are just a few of the expected selections, Walls said.

Unlike a more traditional shopping experience, the GiGi's Playhouse Holiday Market will be smaller, with space for patrons to move at their own pace in an accepting environment, Walls explained. There will also be an unused room during the event that can be utilized should someone become overwhelmed.



GiGi's Playhouse is located at 129 Lubrano Drive, Suite L104 in Annapolis.

George Washington's Mt. Vernon

Across the Potomac, families can visit the historic home of the nation's first president for a sensory-friendly family morning on Saturday, December 12, from 8-9 a.m.

Several measures will be put in place to ensure visitors can enjoy the new exhibit, "George Washington: A Revolutionary Life," in a calmer environment, said Tramia Jackson, director of education programs at George Washington's Mount Vernon.

Hand dryers will be turned off in the restrooms, audio and visuals in the exhibit will be softened and lowered, headphones will be available to rent, sensory bags complete with fidget toys will be provided, and there will be a designated quiet space for anyone who needs a break, Jackson explained.

"For a seasonal touch, families can preview a few themed activities, with support from our staff, from our upcoming Family Day on Saturday, December 19, which celebrates the anniversary of Washington crossing the Delaware on Christmas night in 1776," Jackson said.

Tickets can be reserved online at ***www.mountvernon.org***.

Celebrate Christmas With Worship Services Around Town

Churches of various denominations across the greater Severna Park area are planning worship services to celebrate the birth of Jesus. All services below are scheduled for Thursday, December 24, unless otherwise noted. For more information about a particular church or its services and events, visit that church online.

Anchor Baptist Church
320 West Pasadena Road, Millersville
- 7 p.m. — Christmas Eve service

Antioch, The Apostolic Church
1535 Ritchie Highway, Arnold
Sunday, December 13
- 2 p.m. — Christmas worship service and cookie reception

Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church
429 Asbury Drive, Severna Park
Sunday, December 20
- 9 a.m. — Christmas musical cantata

Broadneck Evangelical Presbyterian Church
235 Bay Dale Drive, Arnold
- 6:30 p.m. — Christmas Eve family candlelight service

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
8249 Jumpers Hole Role Road, Millersville
- 2 p.m. — Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
- 5 p.m. — Candlelight Christmas Eve Service
- 11 p.m. — Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

College Parkway Baptist Church
301 College Parkway, Arnold
- 6 p.m. — Christmas Eve service

Gloria Dei! Lutheran Church
461 College Parkway, Arnold
- 4 p.m. — Family worship service with communion
- 8 p.m. — Candlelight worship service with communion

New Hope Chapel
804 Windsor Road, Arnold
- 6 p.m. — Family candlelight service and cookie reception

Our Shepherd Lutheran Church
400 Benfield Road, Severna Park
- 4 p.m. — Christmas Eve family service
- 7 p.m. — Christmas Eve candlelight service

Saints Baptist Church
160 Truck House Road, Severna Park
- 5 p.m. — Family candlelight service

Severna Park Baptist Church
506 Benfield Road, Severna Park
- 6:33 p.m. — Christmas Eve candlelight gathering

Severna Park Evangelical Presbyterian Church
110 Ritchie Highway, Pasadena
- 6 p.m. — Christmas Eve service
- 8 p.m. — Christmas Eve service

Severna Park United Methodist Church
731 Benfield Road, Severna Park



- 3 p.m. — Children's service
- 5 p.m. — Family service and pageant
- 7 p.m. — Festival service
- 9 p.m. — Festival service

St. John the Evangelist
689 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park (unless otherwise noted)
- 4 p.m. — Christmas Eve mass at Severna Park High School
- 4 p.m. — Christmas Eve mass
- 6 p.m. — Christmas Eve mass
- 8 p.m. — Christmas Eve mass
- Midnight — Christmas Eve mass

Friday, December 25
- 9 a.m. — Christmas Day mass
- 11 a.m. — Christmas Day mass

St. Martin's in-the-Field Episcopal Church
375 Benfield Road, Severna Park
- 4 p.m. — Christmas eve service with pageant
- 9 p.m. — Christmas eve service

Friday, December 25
- 10 a.m. — Christmas Day service

Trinity Bible Church
99 Truck House Road, Severna Park
- 6 p.m. — Christmas Eve party
- 7 p.m. — Christmas Eve candlelight service

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church
611 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park
- 3 p.m. — Children's Christmas pageant
- 4 p.m. — Children's Christmas pageant
- 6 p.m. — Contemporary candlelight service
- 8 p.m. — Traditional candlelight service
- 10 p.m. — Traditional service with communion and candlelight ■

Area Temples Mark Chanukah With Worship Services And Community Events

Local congregations will mark Chanukah, which begins at sundown on December 4 and ends at nightfall on December 12, with meals, services and family activities in early December.

Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold will host a Chanukah dinner at 6 p.m. on Friday, December 4, followed by a Shabbat Chanukah service at 7 p.m. Attendees should bring their own menorahs. A Chanukah Parents' Day Out is scheduled for Saturday, December 5, from 2-6 p.m. Visit *www.annapolistemple.org* for more information.

Congregation Kneseth Israel in Annapolis will hold a Family Shabbat Chanukah Dinner on Friday, December 4, with evening services at 5 p.m. and dinner and festivities at 5:30 p.m. Menorah and Shabbat candles will be lit before services. The menu includes chicken matzah ball soup, chicken schnitzel, roasted vegetables, potato latkes and Hanukkah desserts. Children can enjoy games and activities, along with songs led by the congregation's preschool. Admission is $30 per person, with children 5 and younger admitted free and a maximum cost of $110 per family. For reservations, call 410-263-3924, ext. 1, or visit *www.knesethisrael.org*. ■



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12 Days Of Local Cheer: Making Spirits Bright, Right At Home

By Laura Ascione

No partridge in a pear tree required — just a little time to enjoy the season. From twinkling trees in Severna Park to sparkling boats in Annapolis, some of the most memorable holiday experiences for children and adults alike are (literally) waiting just around the corner.

Across Arnold and Severna Park, the holidays are an opportunity to bundle up, gather with family and neighbors, and keep favorite traditions alive. Whether your idea of seasonal fun includes a quick visit with Santa, an evening of local shopping, or watching lights dance across local waterways, there's no shortage of activities worth making room for on the calendar.

Meredith Winter contributed to this article.

12 Places to See Santa

Have a wish list ready? Here are 12 places around town where kids can meet Santa and tell him what they're hoping to find under the tree.

Jingle Bell Hayride

Kinder Farm Park

1001 Kinder Farm Park Road, Millersville

Saturday, December 5, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Enjoy a festive hayride complete with snacks, warm drinks, marshmallow roasting and a decorated farmhouse – and don't miss Santa and Mrs. Claus, Buddy the Elf and The Grinch. Scout Troop #993 will collect donations for Giving Back — Linda's Legacy. Tickets are required and gate fees apply.

Cookies & Cocoa with Claus!

Children's Theatre of Annapolis

1661 Bay Head Road, Annapolis

Saturday, December 5, 11 a.m. — 1 p.m.

Kids can experience the magic of Christmas with cookies, hot cocoa, story time and of course, a visit from jolly Saint Nick himself. Advance ticket purchase required.

Snackin' with Santa

Harbor City Music Company

160 Truck House Road, Severna Park

Saturday, December 5, 3-5 p.m.

Join the Harbor City Music Company Holiday Chorus for a family-friendly afternoon of treats, kids' crafts, photos with Santa and holiday songs.

Cookies and Cocoa with Santa

Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company

161 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park

Sunday, December 6, 2 p.m.

Santa is coming to the firehouse! Join the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company for cookies and hot chocolate to celebrate the holiday season. Children can enjoy activities while supplies last, and photos with Santa are available for $5.

Cookies and Cocoa with Santa

Severna Park Community Center

623 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park

Friday, December 11, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The Severna Park Community Center welcomes families to one of its favorite annual holiday traditions: Cookies and Cocoa with Santa. The festive evening will feature seasonal activities, sweet treats, music and a special visit from Santa. All activities will take place indoors at the community center, giving families a warm and cozy way to celebrate the holiday season.



Santa on the Trails

Santa on the B&A Trail

Saturday, December 12

12:30 p.m., 1:15 p.m., 1:45 p.m.

Santa will travel the county's trails, making stops and offering holiday greetings along the way. On the B&A Trail, Santa will stop at the Earleigh Heights Ranger Station at 12:30 p.m., at Hatton Regester Green at 1:15 p.m., and at Jones Station Road at 1:45 p.m. Bring a non-perishable item for the Anne Arundel County Food Bank. In case of rain, the event will be held at the Earleigh Heights Ranger Station from 9 a.m. to noon.

Santa at Downs Park

8311 John Downs Loop, Pasadena

Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m. and noon

Join Santa and Mrs. Claus for breakfast or lunch, enjoy story time, and hang out with the elves in a festive holiday atmosphere. Tickets are required for children; adults (up to two adults per child) are free.

Santa at Homestead Gardens

522 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park
Weekends through December 20

Every weekend, Santa visits Homestead Gardens in Severna Park and makes a careful list of children's most-wanted gifts. Free online reservations are required for this festive photo opportunity.

Santa at the Annapolis Mall

2001 Annapolis Mall Road, Annapolis
Through December 24

Join Santa and his elves in a Christmas wonderland through Christmas Eve. Walk-ups are welcome and photo sessions can be booked online.

Santa and Friends on Mount Drive in Pasadena

Saturday, December 12, 5-8 p.m.

Stroll through Mount Drive's light displays and visit with Santa, the Grinch, Frosty and more.

The Magic of Christmas 2026

Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds
1450 Generals Highway, Crownsville
December 11-13 and 18-19

A dazzling hayride through 150 illuminated Christmas trees leads straight to Santa's workshop. Riders can meet Mrs. Claus and Santa Claus to share their Christmas wishes.

Brunch with Santa

O'Loughlin's Restaurant
1258 Bay Dale Drive, Arnold
Sunday, December 20, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Bacon, eggs and a side of Santa? That's exactly what you'll find when Santa comes to brunch at O'Loughlin's Restaurant in Arnold.

11 Festive Productions



From concerts filled with familiar carols to plays that bring holiday stories to life, local stages have plenty to offer this season.

"White Christmas"

Toby's Dinner Theatre
5900 Symphony Woods Road, Columbia
Through January 10

Based on the beloved film, "White Christmas" follows two World War II veterans whose song-and-dance careers lead them to a Vermont Inn with a pair of singing sisters. When they discover their former commander owns the struggling lodge, they stage a holiday spectacular to draw a crowd. The performance features 17 Irving Berlin songs and celebrates friendship, romance and holiday cheer.

"It's A Wonderful Life"

Severna Park Library
45 West McKinsey Road, Severna Park
Thursday, December 17, 5:15-7:30 p.m.

Enjoy a screening of this beloved holiday classic. "It's A Wonderful Life" follows a desperate businessman who, with the help of an angel, learns to see the importance and value of his own life.



Annapolis Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops Concert

Holiday Pops Concert

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra
Friday, December 18, 7:30 p.m. (Maryland Hall)
Saturday, December 19, 3 p.m. (Severna Park High School)

One of Annapolis' most beloved seasonal traditions returns with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra's (ASO) annual Holiday Pops concert. The ASO's 70 world-class musicians, along with vocalist Stephanie Waters, will bring the sounds of the season to life with a festive program featuring classic carols, holiday favorites and heartwarming seasonal music. This year's concert features two performances – one at Maryland Hall and a second at Severna Park High School.

Holiday Spectacular: Frosty Follies

The Talent Machine
Arundel High School
1001 Annapolis Road, Gambrills
December 17-20

Get into the holiday spirit with The Talent Machine's annual Holiday Spectacular, filled with music, dance and seasonal magic. This musical revue will bring joy to the whole family and features Santa, Frosty, Rudolph and a few new surprises.

"It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play"

Compass Rose Theater
Live Arts Studio at the Annapolis Mall
2002 Annapolis Mall Road, Annapolis
November 20 – December 5

This radio play adaptation brings Frank Capra's classic film to the stage as it tells the heartwarming tale of George Bailey, who reflects on his life on Christmas Eve.

"Holiday Inn"

Classic Theatre of Maryland
1804 West Street, Suite 200, Annapolis
November 27 – January 3

For years, "A Christmas Carol" has been a cherished part

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12 Days Of Local Cheer

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of Classic Theatre of Maryland's holiday season. This year, the theater adds a new production to its festivities with the Annapolis premiere of the Broadway musical "Holiday Inn." Inspired by the classic film and featuring the music of Irving Berlin, "Holiday Inn" follows Jim Hardy as he trades city life for the countryside, where he transforms a charming inn into a destination that comes alive with holiday entertainment. "Holiday Inn" will be performed in rotating repertory with "A Christmas Carol" from Black Friday through New Year's weekend.

The Holidays with Canadian Brass

Maryland Hall
801 Chase Street, Annapolis
Tuesday, December 1, 7 p.m.

Canadian Brass brings more than 50 years of musical tradition to the holiday season with a festive performance featuring brilliant brass arrangements and beloved seasonal favorites. The celebrated ensemble will fill the stage with the warmth, energy and joyful sounds of the holidays.

"A Christmas Carol"

Classic Theatre of Maryland
1804 West Street, Suite 200, Annapolis
December 3–27

The beloved "A Christmas Carol" returns for Classic Theatre of Maryland's holiday season, inviting families to experience Charles Dickens' timeless tale of hope, redemption and the true spirit of Christmas. New for this year, the production returns in rotating repertory with the Broadway musical "Holiday Inn," giving audiences two holiday classics throughout the season. Memorable characters, heartfelt storytelling and the enduring reminder that it is never too late to change unite to make "A Christmas Carol" a cherished holiday tradition.

A Charlie Brown Christmas with the Eric Byrd Trio

Maryland Hall
801 Chase Street, Annapolis
Friday, December 4, 6 p.m.

The Eric Byrd Trio puts a soulful, swinging spin on a beloved holiday classic, performing seasonal favorites such as "Linus and Lucy" and "Christmas Time Is Here." The performance blends jazz, holiday nostalgia and plenty of seasonal cheer.

DFC's Holiday Cabaret

Children's Theatre of Annapolis
1661 Bay Head Road, Annapolis
Friday, December 4, 7-9 p.m.

This festive event showcases beloved holiday classics performed by some of Annapolis' most talented artists and features a special guest performance by the Sugar Plum Fairy from the Chesapeake Ballet Company's "The Nutcracker." The Holiday Cabaret honors the life of Darrell F. Conley, a valued and beloved member of the CTA community who staunchly supported the arts and education until his passing in 2023.

Celebration of Christmas

Live Arts Maryland
Maryland Hall
801 Chase Street, Annapolis
Friday, December 11, 7:30 p.m.

This long-running holiday tradition marks the beginning of the holiday season for area families. The concert combines favorite Christmas carols and seasonal orchestral music to celebrate the holiday season with warmth and joy.

10 Holiday Markets



Find handmade gifts, seasonal treats and stocking stuffers from local makers and vendors at these holiday markets and craft bazaars.



Christmas Market at the Severna Park Farmers Market

Advent Market Celebration at St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church

689 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park
Saturday, November 21, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Join St. John's staff for the parish's sixth annual Advent Market Celebration. Food trucks will be onsite as guests browse handmade crafts and religious items from vendors. Free pony rides (donations accepted) and a petting zoo will open at 11 a.m. St. Nicholas will also make an appearance, and photos are available for a donation fee. The market takes place on Larsen Field and inside the school auditorium. A 5:15 p.m. Mass, open to market attendees, will follow.

Holiday Bazaar at St. Margaret's Church

1601 Pleasant Plains Road, Annapolis
Saturday, November 21, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

This year's bazaar will feature local vendors and crafters, raffles, food for purchase, live animals from Echoes of Nature and much more.

Holiday Bazaar at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church

611 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park
Saturday, November 21, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

The Woods Church Holiday Bazaar features holiday treasures, themed baskets up for bidding, a visit from Santa and more. All proceeds go to church-supported missions.

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12 Days Of Local Cheer

Continued from page 20

Holiday Vendor Fair at Park Books

555 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park
Saturday, November 28, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Spend Small Business Saturday browsing one-of-a-kind gifts for family, friends and neighbors. This holiday market will feature candles, jewelry, ceramics, art, cards, treats and more.

Annapolis Holiday Market at the Annapolis Mall

1040 Annapolis Mall Road, Annapolis
December 4—13

The Annapolis Holiday Market returns for a fifth year, now in a new location. The market is home to arts and crafts from local vendors, holiday décor, Christmas wreaths, traditional holiday market foods and more.

Craft Bazaar at Broadneck High School

1265 Green Holly Drive, Annapolis
Saturday, December 5, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The Broadneck High School Craft Bazaar typically welcomes more than 2,000 shoppers to browse handmade goods from more than 130 vendors in attendance. The bazaar also features a cashless concession stand, a bake sale and a raffle of donated vendor items.

Holiday Market at The Station on B&A Trail

44 W. Earleigh Heights Road, Severna Park
Sunday, December 6, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Come for the local vendors and stay for the holiday cheer and a visit from Santa. Check The Station on Facebook or Instagram for more details.

Holiday Craft Fair at Severn Run High School

8065 New Cut Road, Severn
Sunday, December 6, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Join the Severn Run High School PTSA for a day of shopping and community at the third annual holiday craft fair. Pop into the school's cafeteria to shop local and spread holiday cheer. All proceeds support Severn Run High School PTSA programs and events. Check Facebook or call the school for more details.

Severna Park Farmers Market Christmas Market

Park and Ride at Ritchie Highway and Jones Station Road, Severna Park
Saturday, December 12, 8 a.m. — noon

The regular farmers market season has come to a close, so don't miss an opportunity to join vendors for a special Christmas Market.

Holiday Marketplace at the Severna Park Community Center

623 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park
Sunday, December 13, 1-4 p.m.

The Severna Park Community Center's Holiday Marketplace will feature an afternoon of seasonal shopping and local vendors. Visitors can browse handmade items and check items off their holiday lists as they support local businesses.

9 unique gift cards to give



Yuzu meringue brioche donuts at Y'ollk Bakery

Who doesn't love to receive gift cards for Christmas? Whether you have someone on your list who's hard to shop for, you want to wow with great stocking stuffers, or you're looking for a fun way to bless a teacher, clergy member, colleague or neighbor, gift cards are simple ways to spark joy while keeping shopping dollars local.

These nine area small businesses offer gift cards that can be redeemed for tasty treats, kids' activities, unique experiences and more.

- **BD Provisions**
- **Blended Essentials**
- **Donut Shack**
- **Great American Car Wash**
- **Image Creators**
- **Rolly Pollies**
- **Severna Park Lanes**
- **The Sugar Shoppe**
- **Y'ollk Bakery**

8 ways to give back

The holidays usher in a time of merriment, celebration and giving, and there are plenty of ways to give of your time, talent and treasure to make the season brighter for those in need in the community. Toy and clothing drives are underway around town and nonprofits are collecting holiday meals. Make family memories by giving together through one or more of these opportunities. Visit each organization's website or contact the groups directly for more information.

Admiral Cleaners' Call for Coats

This annual initiative invites community members to donate new and gently used coats to those in need through the end of November. Residents can drop off donations at any Admiral Cleaners location, including its Severna Park store at 40 West McKinsey Road. Customers who use the

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12 Days Of Local Cheer

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company's pickup and delivery service can also participate by placing donated coats in a separate, clearly marked bag for their route driver.

Arundel Bank's Holiday Toy Drive

Customers, employees and community members are invited to drop off new and unwrapped toys at any of Arundel Bank's Maryland branch locations in Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Pasadena and Severna Park. Donation collection boxes will be located in each branch lobby throughout the 24th annual drive, which runs through December 4.

SPAN's Holiday Caring Program

You can help provide holiday meals and Christmas gifts for children and local families. This year, the team at SPAN hopes to bless more than 400 children. Participants can sponsor a child or family, provide a grocery gift card, or both. Email *spanhelps@yahoo.com* or call 410-647-0889 for more information.

Walk the Walk Foundation's Christmas for Children

Each year this initiative gives local community members an opportunity to sponsor children for Christmas by purchasing gifts for those families who otherwise would not be able to afford them. There are many volunteer opportunities as well. Walk the Walk Foundation is also requesting $50 grocery gift cards by December 12 to help provide holiday meals for families.



Christmas for Children at Walk the Walk Foundation

Phronesis Wealth Management's Coat and Toiletry Drive

Located in Severna Park, Phronesis Wealth Management has partnered with Giving Back — Linda's Legacy for its annual coat and toiletry drive for a seventh year in a row, with a goal to provide warm clothes and other personal necessities for those in need in local communities. Drop off donations through December 11.

Partners In Care's Elves For Elders

This program spreads holiday cheer and combats loneliness by helping older adults feel remembered and connected during the holidays. Elves can fill stockings with things like night lights, unscented toiletries, scarves, gloves, puzzles, magnifying or reading tools, stationery and anything



the holiday inspires. Elves can deliver stockings, too. Donations must be dropped off by December 5.

Fence & Deck Connection's Holiday Drive

This annual community event directly supports the Blue Ribbon Project, an organization dedicated to helping vulnerable children and young adults who have experienced abuse, neglect or trauma. Bring a donation and enjoy the festivities with family on December 5. See page XX for more information.

AACPL's Community Coat Drive

The Anne Arundel County Public Library system invites community members to donate gently used winter coats, scarves and hats at any branch. Anyone needing warm clothing can take what they need from the community coat racks. Contact local branches for specific needs and donation guidelines.

7 Spectacular Light Displays

From neighbors who go all out decorating their homes to drive-through light shows, here's where to see Christmas lights close to home.



Lights on the Bay

A favorite holiday tradition returns to Sandy Point State Park as the SPCA of Anne Arundel County presents the 32nd annual Lights on the Bay. The two-mile drive along the Chesapeake Bay features approximately 70 animated and stationary light displays inspired by historic Annapolis, Santa's North Pole and the holiday season.

Snowflake Alley

These whimsical lights shine throughout Cabbage Alley off Main Street in Annapolis. Temporarily renamed "Snowflake Alley" for the holiday season, the short cut-through is lit with twinkling snowflakes, making it the perfect photo backdrop for fun holiday photos.

North Pole Lights Walk

From November 28 through December 28 at Willow Oak Flower and Herb Farm, enjoy a half-mile stroll through a garden of flowers and arctic animals that ends at the North Pole Palace. Visit Santa in the Secret Garden and take pictures in Santa's magical sleigh.

"The Tree" at 204 Ullman Road

Planted in 1986, this towering Norwegian Spruce, which was purchased at Diehl's Produce in Severna Park, becomes a local attraction each year when it is lit with more than 56,000 lights. The tree has become a favorite and much-loved local holiday light tradition.

The Drive-Thru Display at 703 Pasadena Road

This cheerful collection of holiday lights offers something

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Park Plaza | 550-582 Governor Ritchie Highway, Severna Park, Maryland

The Nutcracker



Celebrate the holiday season!

Artistic Director Nicole Kelsch's fresh take on a classic returns this season in The Nutcracker. As always, this magical holiday tradition is filled with exuberant dance, beloved characters, and timeless music that delights audiences of all ages—now with an Annapolis twist!

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BM Ballet Theatre of Maryland

December 12-20, 2026 at Maryland Hall

www.BalletMaryland.org

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12 Days Of Local Cheer

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for everyone. The best part? Holiday light enthusiasts can drive through the lights multiple times.

Merriweather Symphony of Lights

Travel a bit outside of Severna Park, and you'll find the Symphony of Lights at Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia. More than 300,000 lights and holiday scenes twinkle, dance and dazzle as spectators drive through and admire the displays.



The Tree" at 204 Ullman Road

Garden of Lights at Brookside Gardens

Through January 3, explore this dazzling display that transforms Brookside Gardens in Wheaton into a magical winter wonderland. Take the family for a stroll through the half-mile outdoor exhibit of one-of-a-kind light displays adorning the grounds of this beautiful park.

6 Faith—Centered Celebrations

From special services to musical performances, local organizations and congregations welcome neighbors to observe the holidays together.



Christmas Concert and Dessert

Severna Park Baptist Church
506 Benfield Road, Severna Park
December 5, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Enjoy Christmas songs and sweet treats as the band at Severna Park Baptist Church plays holiday songs during "An Evening in December." Desserts and beverages, along with friendly conversations, will be plentiful. Contact the church office to RSVP.



Live Nativity at St. John the Evangelist

Live Nativity

St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church
689 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park
Saturday, December 12, 6:15-7:30 p.m.

St. John's live nativity takes place on Larsen Field, which will be transformed into a tranquil journey to Bethlehem with Jesus, Mary, Joseph and a stable full of animals. The event offers guests an evening of quiet worship and reflection. End the evening with fellowship, hot cocoa and cookies around a bonfire.

Handel's "Messiah"

United States Naval Academy Chapel
121 Blake Road, Annapolis
December 5-6

Continuing a long-standing tradition, the United States Naval Academy Glee Club will join the Washington Festival Orchestra and acclaimed soloists to perform selections from Handel's beloved "Messiah" on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon. The performances are conducted by Aaron Smith, USNA director of musical activities. Tickets are required. A shuttle will run for all performances.

"The Carols of Christmas"

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church
611 Baltimore Annapolis Boulevard, Severna Park
December 4-5, 7 p.m.

Audiences are invited to enjoy an hour of reflection and tranquility through the beautiful sounds of the harp and the warm glow of candlelight at Woods Church. "The Carols of Christmas" will bring beloved Christmas carols to life through instrumental solos, vocal duets and choral anthems. The program will feature Benjamin Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" as its centerpiece, offering a peaceful celebration of the holiday season. The concert is free, but registration is required.

Christmas Musical Cantata

Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church
429 Asbury Drive, Severna Park
Sunday, December 20, 9 a.m.

Celebrate the season with the congregation at Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church during their annual Christmas Musical Cantata. Get in the Christmas spirit and reflect on the true meaning of the holiday through music and worship.

Family Christmas Pageant

Severna Park United Methodist Church
731 Benfield Road, Severna Park
Thursday, December 24, 5 p.m.

Celebrate the Christmas story with a pageant presented by second graders at Severna Park United Methodist Church on Christmas Eve. The church's SPARK worship praise band will lead contemporary music as well. Or, attend an interactive family service at 3 p.m. designed with young children in mind that will feature an impromptu Christmas pageant and contemporary music.

Continued on page 28

12 Days Of Local Cheer

Continued from page 27

5 Places to Buy Jewelry

You might just find five golden rings at these local shops, and you can discover something beautiful and bright for that special someone on your shopping list at all of them. Shop local this year for jewelry gifts, from diamonds to costume pieces and more.

5

Sanders Diamond Jewelers

The Cottage

Homestead Gardens

Traynham's Jewelers

Blue Hydrangea Boutique



Jewelry at Blue Hydrangea Boutique

4

4 "Nutcracker" Performances

Follow Clara from a Christmas Eve part to the Land of the Sweets in these local productions of "The Nutcracker."

"The Nutcracker" by The Chesapeake Ballet Company

Severna Park Library

45 West McKinsey Road, Severna Park

Tuesday, December 1, 6-7 p.m.

Enjoy a mini preview of the classic story of this Christmas classic as The Chesapeake Ballet Company gears up for its holiday performances.





Ballet Theatre of Maryland's "The Nutcracker"

"The Nutcracker" by The Dance Center at the Severna Park Community Center

Severna Park High School
60 Robinson Road, Severna Park
Sunday, December 6, 1 p.m. and 4 p.m.

Presented by Chick-fil-A Severna Park, experience the magic of "The Nutcracker" as the talented dancers of the Dance Center at the Severna Park Community Center bring this holiday classic to life through dancing and festive music. Tickets required.

Ballet Theatre of Maryland's "The Nutcracker"

Maryland Hall
801 Chase Street, Annapolis
December 12-20

Ballet Theatre of Maryland's "The Nutcracker" returns for the holiday season with an unmistakable Annapolis twist thanks to Artistic Director Nicole Kelsch's fresh take on the classic. Set in 19th-century Annapolis, the production blends the familiar story with local history and regional touches.

Chesapeake Ballet Company presents "The Nutcracker"

Children's Theatre of Annapolis
1661 Bay Head Road, Annapolis
December 12-20

Make the holiday season a little more magical with a performance to "go nuts" over. The Chesapeake Ballet Company will present the classic holiday tale of "The Nutcracker," told through music and dance.

Continued on page 31

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(Park Tavern, JBs, Donnellys Dockside, Pratt Street Ale House, Oliver Brewing Company)

12 Days Of Local Cheer

Continued from page 29

3 Hot Chocolate Stops

Warm up with a cup of hot chocolate from one of these local spots after a night of looking at Christmas lights.



Hot Cocoa at The Big Bean

The Big Bean

Those in need of a warm pick-me-up (perhaps after visiting Santa on the B&A Trail) can stop by The Big Bean for a hot chocolate or a Mexican hot chocolate.

Rise Up Coffee Roasters

Find classic hot chocolate and a specialty s'mores hot chocolate at Rise Up Coffee in Severna Park and Arnold. And don't worry — the frozen hot chocolate is still on the menu.

Always Ice Cream Company

Stop by Always Ice Cream for hot cocoa, made with malt using a recipe passed down for over 20 years. And it's never too cold for a frozen treat — you might find hot cocoa ice cream too.

2 Holiday Boat Parades

Watch Christmas lights ripple across the water as decked-out boats cruise past.

Deep Creek Lighted Boat Parade

Donnelly's Dockside
1050 Deep Creek Avenue, Arnold
Saturday, November 21, 5:30 p.m.

This light parade, which travels around Deep Creek in Arnold, is back for another year. Watch decorated boats from a table at Donnelly's Dockside or from a home overlooking Deep Creek. The captain of the best-decorated boat wins a prize and gets to select a charity to receive a donation from registration fees.



Deep Creek Lighted Boat Parade

Eastport Yacht Club Lights Parade

Annapolis City Dock and Surrounding Waterfront
Saturday, December 12, 6-8 p.m.

Now in its 44th year, the Eastport Yacht Club's Lights Parade is one of the area's most-loved events during the holiday season. Boats of all shapes and sizes are decked out in festive lights and Christmas decorations as they make their way through Annapolis Harbor.

1 Tree Lighting

Join neighbors for the countdown as Severna Park's Christmas tree glows at the annual lighting.



GSPACC Tree Lighting Celebration

Holiday Tree Lighting

Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce
1 Holly Avenue, Severna Park
Friday, December 4, 5-6:30 p.m.

Santa and the Grinch will greet holiday revelers who gather to watch the annual tree lighting celebration. The event features holiday treats and live entertainment from student bands, choruses and dance ensembles.

For more information about any of the events and programs listed above, visit each organization's website or social media pages. ■

Kid Kindness Advent

Advent calendars are always fun for kids and kids at heart, whether they contain candy, small gifts or other surprises. One unique twist on this familiar tradition is advent calendars designed to get kids into the spirit of giving through acts of kindness. These calendars,

DECEMBER



1 Give a toy to a child in need

Bring a new, unwrapped gift to Arundel Bank's holiday toy drive through December 4



2 Make a card for a neighbor



3 Make paper snowflakes for your family to enjoy around the home



4 Pay someone a compliment at the GSPACC Tree Lighting Celebration



8 Donate a toiletry item

Meet a basic need during Phronesis Wealth Management's coat, clothing and toiletry drive through December 11



9 Make a card for a teacher



10 Leave a book at a Little Free Library for someone to enjoy



14 Donate food to a local pantry

SPAN, the Asbury Church Assistance Network and My Brother's Pantry regularly accept donations



15 Leave a snack out for a delivery driver



16 Create a homemade gift for a family member



20 Leave an encouraging note for someone to find



21 Deliver hot cocoa to someone you care about



22 Help a sibling or friend with a chore or task

Calendar - Severna Park Edition

like the one below, not only provide ideas for holiday activities, but also encourage children to embrace their creativity and generosity. Families can create special memories blessing others together using this hyperlocal kindness calendar. It may not be practical to do every daily activity, but kids (or adults!) can choose a couple each week to have fun making spirits bright for those around them. w

Check websites for times and additional information before heading out to local events and drives. Some events require advance registration. The calendar on page 36 also contains times and web links.

5 **Help neighbors stay warm**
Donate to people experiencing homelessness through the clothing drive at Kinder Farm Park's Jingle Bell Hayride



6 **Create cards or paper decorations to bless residents of an assisted living facility**



7 **Leave a drink out for a delivery driver**



11 **Make a craft for someone**
Get creative at Cookies & Cocoa with Santa at the Severna Park Community Center



12 **Buy a gift from a local artisan**
Shop small at the Severna Park Farmers Market's Christmas Market



13 **Bake Christmas cookies for someone in your community**



17 **Help a parent wrap presents**



18 **Make an ornament for a loved one**



19 **Find gifts for family**
Shop and get gifts wrapped at Severna Park United Methodist Church's Holiday Shoppe



23 **Call a family member who isn't local to wish them a Merry Christmas**



24 **Ask how you can help with Christmas Eve dinner**



25 **Read a Christmas story to your family**

Fence & Deck Connection Celebrates 20 Years Of Giving Back With Annual Holiday Drive

By Nicole Bailey

Since 1991, Fence & Deck Connection has helped homeowners throughout Anne Arundel County create lasting memories with high-quality fences, decks, and screened porches. But transforming backyards isn't the only way the company makes a difference. Giving back to the communities and neighbors it serves has always been a cornerstone of its mission.

This holiday season, Fence & Deck Connection is excited to celebrate its 20th Annual Holiday Drive on Saturday, December 5, from 4-7 p.m. at 8057 Veterans Highway in Millersville. This year's theme, "Holiday Explorers: A North Pole Adventure for a Cause," invites families to experience a magical winter wonderland filled with adventure, festive activities and holiday cheer.

Young adventurers can embark on an exciting North Pole expedition, navigating the Ice Crystal Labyrinth, racing through the Snowball Crash Course, conquering the Arctic Glacier Slide, meeting North Pole creatures, and enjoying s'mores around the Explorer Campfire. Along the way, children can collect special treasures, including Matchbox cars, LEGO figures, Pokémon cards, squishies and more. Those who complete their expedition will earn the ultimate honor: Santa's Elite Explorer Badge.

Of course, no holiday adventure would be complete without Santa. Families can stop by Santa Base Station for a special holiday photo and celebrate an evening of fun and unforgettable memories.

Best of all, the event supports a wonderful local cause. Donations of new, unwrapped toys and new clothing with tags still attached will benefit The Blue Ribbon Project, a local organization dedicated to supporting children and young adults who have experienced abuse, neglect or trauma. Through advocacy, resources and empowering programs, the organization works to help survivors find comfort, build resilience, and create brighter futures.

Fence & Deck Connection is especially proud of its partnership with The Blue Ribbon Project, having worked closely with the organization for more than a decade. The company's Annapolis and Millersville locations also serve as drop-off locations for the organization's Backpacks of Love program.

The 20th Annual Holiday Drive is a wonderful opportunity for families to come together, enjoy a little holiday magic, and make a meaningful difference in the lives of local children.

For additional event information and updates, visit *www.fenceanddeckconnection.com* or find the event on the Fence & Deck Connection Facebook page.

If you're thinking about giving your home a gift this holiday season, Fence & Deck Connection installs year-round. Beat the spring rush and contact the team at 410-757-5511 to learn more about its customizable fence, deck, and screened porch options.

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Holiday Calendar

Ongoing: The Anne Arundel County Public Library system accepts donations of gently used winter coats, scarves and hats at any branch.

Through November 30: Admiral Cleaners is collecting new and seldom-used coats for people in need. Info: 410-216-5673

Through December 4: Arundel Bank's 24th annual toy drive. Accepting new, unwrapped toys at all locations. Info: *www.arundelbank.com*

Through December 11: Phronesis Wealth Management and Giving Back — Linda's Legacy's seventh annual Coat and Toiletry Drive. Info: *www.phronesiswealthmanagement.com/events*

Through December 13: Gift and gift card drop-off for SPAN's Holiday Caring Program. Info: *www.spanhelps.org/christmas_holiday_caring*

Through December 24: Pictures with Santa and his elves at the Annapolis Mall. Info: *www.whereissanta.com*

Through December 30: Holiday train garden daily at Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville. Closed Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Info: *www.homesteadgardens.com*

November 20 — December 5: Compass Rose Theater presents "It's A Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play" at Live Arts Studio at the Annapolis Mall. Info: *www.compassrosetheater.org*

November 23 — January 3: Lights on the Bay at Sandy Point State Park. Info: *www.lightsonthebaymd.org*

November 27 — January 3: Classic Theatre of Maryland presents "Holiday Inn." Info: *www.classictheatremaryland.org*

Saturday, November 21: Holiday Bazaar at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church, 9 a.m. — 1 p.m. Info: *www.woodschurch.org*

Saturday, November 21: Holiday Bazaar at St. Margaret's Church, 9 a.m. — 2 p.m. Info: *www.st-margarets.org*

Saturday, November 21: Advent Market Celebration at St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church, 11 a.m. — 4 p.m. Info: *www.stjohnsp.org/events*

Saturday, November 21: Deep Creek Lighted Boat Parade at Donnelly's Dockside, 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 22: Santa's Sleigh and Holiday Market at Sand and Silo Marketplace, 11 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Tuesday, November 24: Community Ecumenical Thanksgiving service hosted by Asbury Town Neck and Severna Park United Methodist churches at Asbury Town Neck, 7 p.m.

Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving Day

Saturday, November 28: Small Business Saturday

Saturday, November 28: Holiday Vendor Fair at Park Books, 10 a.m. — 3 p.m. Info: *www.parkbooksmd.com*

Sunday, November 29: Grand Illumination in downtown Annapolis. The ceremony begins at 3 p.m., with the tree lighting to follow after dark. Info: *www.downtownannapolispartnership.org/grand-illumination*

Tuesday, December 1: Giving Tuesday

Tuesday, December 1: Winter Cookie Decorating Workshop at the Broadneck Library, 4:30-5 p.m. and 6-6:30 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Tuesday, December 1: "The Nutcracker" by The Chesapeake Ballet Company at the Severna Park Library, 6-7 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Tuesday, December 1: Maryland Hall presents "The Holidays with Canadian Brass," 7 p.m. Info: *www.marylandhall.org/events*

Wednesday, December 2: Trident Brass Holiday Concert at Mahan Hall, United States Naval Academy, 7 p.m. Info: *navyperforms.showare.com*

Thursday, December 3: Midnight Madness in Annapolis from 4 p.m. — midnight. Info: *www.downtownannapolispartnership.org*

December 3 — December 27: "A Christmas Carol" at Classic Theatre of Maryland. Info: *www.classictheatremaryland.org*

Friday, December 4 — Saturday, December 5: "The Carols of Christmas" at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church in Severna Park, 7 p.m. Info: *www.woodstix.org*

Friday, December 4 — Saturday, December 12: Chanukah

Friday, December 4 — Sunday, December 13: Annapolis Holiday Market at the Annapolis Mall. Info: *www.annapolisholidaymarket.com*

Friday, December 4: Holiday Tree Lighting at the Greater Severna Park and Arnold Chamber of Commerce in Severna Park, 5-6:30 p.m. Info: *www.gspacc.com*

Friday, December 4: A Charlie Brown Christmas with the Eric Byrd Trio at Maryland Hall, 6 p.m. Info: *www.marylandhall.org/events*

Friday, December 4: DFC's Holiday Cabaret at Children's Theatre of Annapolis, 7-9 p.m. Info: *www.childrenstheatreofannapolis.org*

Friday, December 4: AACC Dance Company Presents: "Rhythm in Motion" Mixed Repertoire and Duke Ellington's Jazz Nutcracker Suite at Anne Arundel Community College, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Info: *www.aacc.edu/calendar*

Saturday, December 5 — Sunday, December 6: Handel's "Messiah" at the United States Naval Academy Chapel. Info: *navyperforms.showare.com*

Saturday, December 5: Deadline for stuffed stockings and donations to support Partners In Care's Elves For Elders program. Info: *www.partnersincare.org*

Saturday, December 5: Hollyberry Garden Club's holiday wreath-making workshop at Kinder Farm Park, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Info: *www.eventbrite.com*



Saturday, December 5: Broadneck High School Craft Bazaar, 9:30 a.m. — 3 p.m. Info: *www.broadneckboosters.org*

Saturday, December 5: Jingle Bell Hayride at Kinder Farm Park, 10 a.m. — 1 p.m. Info: *www.kinderfarmpark.org*

Saturday, December 5: Fence & Deck Connection's annual holiday drive in Millersville, 4-7 p.m. Info: *www.fenceanddeckconnection.com*

Saturday, December 5: "An Evening In December" Christmas show at Severna Park Baptist Church, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Info: *www.spbcmd.com/events*

Sunday, December 6: Holiday Market at The Station on the B&A Trail in Severna Park, 9 a.m. — 1 p.m.

Sunday, December 6: Paws and Claus Fundraiser at Severna Park Taphouse, noon — 3 p.m. Info: *www.aaha-rescue.org/events*

Sunday, December 6: The Dance Center at the Severna Park Community Center presents "The Nutcracker" at Severna Park High School, 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Info: *www.spcommunitycenter.org*

Sunday, December 6: Cookies and Cocoa with Santa at the Earleigh Heights Volunteer Fire Company, 2 p.m. Info: *www.ehvfc.org*

Sunday, December 6: S'mores and S'music featuring a baked potato bar, Christmas carols and more at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 5-7 p.m. Info: *www.severnaparkumc.org/events*

Tuesday, December 8 — Saturday, December 12: Walk the Walk Foundation's Christmas for Children gift drop-off deadline at designated locations. Info: *www.wtwf.org/christmas-for-children*

Tuesday, December 8: Holiday Taste and Sip at Chartwell Golf and Country Club in Severna Park, 5-8 p.m. Info: *www.gspacc.com*

Thursday, December 10: Midnight Madness in Annapolis from 4 p.m. — midnight. Info: *www.downtownannapolispartnership.org*

Thursday, December 10: Surviving the Holiday Blues webinar hosted by Rev. Tori Butler of Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church, 6:30 p.m. Info: *www.asburytownneck.org*

Friday, December 11 — Sunday, December 13: The Magic of Christmas 2026 at the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds in Crownsville. Info: *www.aacountyfair.org/events*

Friday, December 11: Cookies and Cocoa with Santa at the Severna Park Community Center, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Info: *www.spcommunitycenter.org*

Friday, December 11: Christmas Jazz Celebration at Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church, 6-9 p.m. Tickets required. Info: *www.asburytownneck.org*

Friday, December 11: Celebration of Christmas at Maryland Hall, 7:30 p.m. Info: *www.liveartsmd.org*

Saturday, December 12 — Sunday, December 20: Ballet Theatre of Maryland's "The Nutcracker" at Maryland Hall. Info: *www.balletmaryland.org*

Saturday, December 12 — Sunday, December 20: Chesapeake Ballet Company presents "The Nutcracker" at Children's Theatre of Annapolis. Info: *www.chesapeakeballetcompany.com*

Saturday, December 12: Severna Park Farmer's Market Christmas Market, 8 a.m. — noon. Info: *www.facebook.com/severnaparkfarmersmarket*

Saturday, December 12: Santa on the B&A Trail; times vary. Info: *www.friendsofaatrails.org*

Saturday, December 12: Live Nativity at St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church in Severna Park, 6:15-7:30 p.m. Info: *www.stjohnsp.org/events*

Saturday, December 12: Eastport Yacht Club Lights Parade in Annapolis, 6-8 p.m. Info: *www.eyclightsparade.org*

Sunday, December 13: Holiday Marketplace at the Severna Park Community Center, 1-4 p.m. Info: *www.spcommunitycenter.org*

Sunday, December 13: Snowflake Soiree Holiday Ball at Fred Astaire Dance Studios in Severna Park, 1-4 p.m. Info: *www.fredastaire.com*

Thursday, December 17: Midnight Madness in Annapolis from 4-11 p.m. Info: *www.downtownannapolispartnership.org*

Thursday, December 17: "It's A Wonderful Life" at the Severna Park Library, 5:15-7:30 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Friday, December 18 — Saturday, December 19: The Magic of Christmas 2026 at the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds in Crownsville. Info: *www.aacountyfair.org/events*

Friday, December 18: The Annapolis Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops Concert at Maryland Hall, 7:30 p.m. Info: *www.annapolissymphony.org*

Saturday, December 19: Holiday Shoppe kids' shopping and gift-wrapping event at Severna Park United Methodist Church, 9 a.m. — 3 p.m. Info: *www.severnaparkumc.org/events*

Saturday, December 19: STEAM Storytime: Gingerbread Man at the Severna Park Library, 10-11 a.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Saturday, December 19: Winter Solstice Storytime at the Broadneck Library, 10:30-11 a.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Saturday, December 19: Art Afternoon: Inspired by "The Snowy Day" at the Severna Park Library, 2-3 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Saturday, December 19: The Annapolis Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops Concert at Severna Park High School, 3 p.m. Info: *www.annapolissymphony.org*

Sunday, December 20: Annual Christmas Musical Cantata at Asbury Town Neck United Methodist Church, 9 a.m. Info: *www.asburytownneck.org*

Sunday, December 20: Christmas Cantata at Anchor Baptist Church, 10:30 a.m. Info: *www.anchorbaptistonline.org/events*

Sunday, December 20: Cookie Exchange & Social at Severna Park Baptist Church, noon. Info: *www.spbcmd.com/events*

Monday, December 21: Blue Christmas service at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church, 7 p.m. Info: *www.woodschurch.org*

Monday, December 21: Blue Christmas service at St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church, 7 p.m. Info: *www.stmartinsinthefield.org*

Thursday, December 24: Christmas Eve

Friday, December 25: Christmas Day

Sunday, December 27: "Miracle in Annapolis" Budweiser Clydesdale meet-and-greet at West Street and Church Circle in Annapolis, 1:30-4:30 p.m. Info: *www.iwsannapolis.com/calendar-of-events*

Monday, December 28: Military Bowl at Navy-Marine Corps Stadium in Annapolis, 2 p.m. Info: *www.militarybowl.org*

Thursday, December 31: New Years Eve Hymn Sing and Fellowship at Anchor Baptist Church, 7-10 p.m. Info: *www.anchorbaptistonline.org/events*

Thursday, December 31: Noon Year's Eve Storytime at the Severna Park Library, 11:30 a.m. — 12:15 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events*

Thursday, December 31: Noon Year's Eve! at the Broadneck Library, 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m. Info: *www.aacpl.net/events* ■



A Table Full Of Thanks Without The Prep Work

Thanksgiving brings family and friends together, but hosting the holiday can mean days of shopping, cooking and cleaning - followed by an evening at the kitchen sink.

Dining out offers a chance to trade the apron for a seat at the table. With someone else handling the turkey, timing the side dishes, and washing the plates, everyone can spend more time catching up, sharing memories, and enjoying the company.

For those looking to start a new tradition or take a year off from hosting, these area restaurants will offer Thanksgiving dining options on Thursday, November 26. Make reservations early and check each restaurant's holiday menu and seating policies before booking.

Positano: This West Annapolis Italian restaurant offers Thanksgiving Day seatings at 12:30 p.m., 3 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Reservations are highly recommended. *www.positanoannapolis.com*

Chart House Prime Annapolis: Those seeking something beyond turkey can explore Chart House Prime's Thanksgiving offerings, which include a traditional turkey dinner alongside a three-course menu featuring steak and seafood selections. www.chart-house.com

Carpaccio Tuscan Kitchen & Wine Bar: Gather in Annapolis for Thanksgiving Day seatings at noon, 2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. Reservations are required, and a two-hour dining limit will be in place. *www.carpacciotuscankitchen.com*

Blackwall Hitch: Blackwall Hitch in Eastport offers a Thanksgiving buffet from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Options include turkey and prime rib carving stations, seafood, traditional sides and desserts. Children younger than 3 eat free. *www.blackwallhitchannapolis.com*

Brian Boru Irish Restaurant & Pub: Stay close to home with a Thanksgiving buffet at Brian Boru in Severna Park. Served from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., the buffet includes roasted turkey, ham, salmon, shepherd's pie, holiday sides and desserts. *www.brianborupub.com*

Severn Inn: The Severn Inn offers a Thanksgiving buffet for those planning a holiday meal overlooking the Severn River. *www.severninn.com*

The Captain's Daughter: Located inside The Westin Annapolis, The Captain's Daughter offers another setting for gathering around the holiday table. *www.captainsdaughterannapolis.com*

Carrol's Creek Cafe: Enjoy Thanksgiving on the Annapolis waterfront at Carrol's Creek Cafe, where holiday dinner will be served from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The Thanksgiving menu will replace the restaurant's regular offerings for the day. *www.carrolscreek.com*

Ram's Head Tavern: Let the chefs at Ram's Head do the cooking and relax in the tavern's historic atmosphere. *www.ramsheadtavern.com*

Ram's Head Roadhouse: Stop in for a three-course Thanksgiving dinner featuring roasted turkey, traditional sides and pumpkin cheesecake. *www.ramsheadroadhouse.com* ■





Holiday Pops



with vocalist Stephanie Waters

Dec 19, 2026 | 3:00pm

Severna Park High School



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