

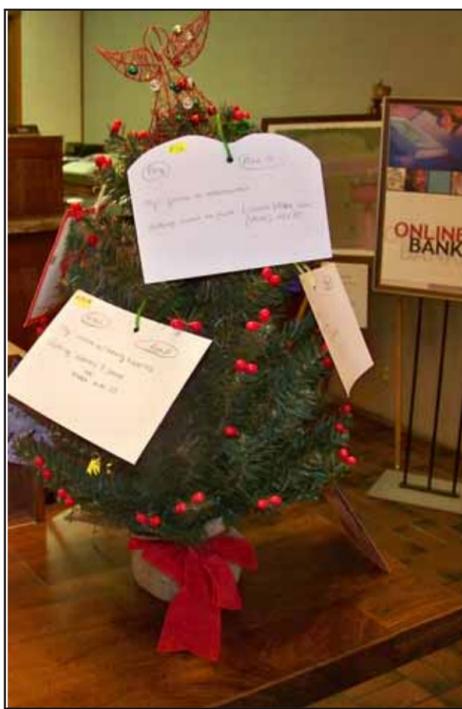
Reason for the Season is still here

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

At this time of the year a familiar phrase that I often hear is, "Christmas has become too commercialized, people seem to forget the real meaning of Christmas." I can understand how this perception comes about. I would imagine if you drove around you would probably see more plastic Santa Clauses and reindeer in yards than you would see Manger scenes.

But I'm not sure this observation is completely right. My memories of Christmas have always been very happy, and it has nothing to do with receiving gifts (I've always had more fun giving a gift than receiving one.) My happiness comes from watching other people during this season. People seem to become more light hearted, more generous, happier and more outgoing. Families come together and appreciate each other. Friends get together and enjoy each other's company. Even strangers wish each other a Merry Christmas.

All Christian religions celebrate Christmas as the birth of Christ, and urge us to bring "Joy to the World." And I truly believe that everytime you give a small gift, offer a Christmas greeting, or even smile at someone, you are doing your part in bringing "Joy to the World." So I would disagree with those that criticize what Christmas has become. Most people, whether they realize it or not, do celebrate the true meaning of Christmas through their actions at



The Angel Trees in town. At left is the tree in the Econ-O-Mart, and at right is the tree in Community Bank. Please consider helping if you are able.

this festive time.

So a special thank you goes out to everyone who has decorated their homes for me to see, to everyone who has sent me a card, and to everyone who has given me a Christmas greeting. You've already made this year a happy one, and I can't wait until next

week.

(If you would like to help this season, there are two Angel Trees in town. One is at the Econ-O-Mart, and the other is in Community Bank. Just select a gift request from the tree, and drop the gift off at Community Action. They would like the gifts by

this Friday if possible, but will accept them up to Christmas. Also, the Gazette is working with the school in gathering gifts for children. If you have something you would like to give, feel free to drop it off at the Gazette Office and we'll get it to the school.)

Donnie Orr to assume Police Chief duties

By Jim Rudisill

Assistant Police Chief Donnie Orr will assume his new duties as Columbus Junction Police Chief when current Police Chief Marlin O'Donnell retires December 31. The city council approved the appointment during its regular meeting December 9, according to Mayor Dan Wilson. Wilson said O'Donnell, who announced his retirement in August, had worked over 18 years for the city. Orr has worked about 17 years for the city, Wilson added.

Orr is expected to take his oath of office on December 30. Normally the council would be meeting on the fourth Wednesday of the month, which would be December 23, but because of Christmas, the council has moved the meeting back.

Wilson said the city has an additional small stipend that is paid for the police chief's position, but there is no set salary for the position. Wilson said the council did not take any action on the stipend when it approved Orr's appointment, but he believed that issue would be discussed at the beginning of the year.

In other action, the council approved a resolution that will establish a sick leave reimbursement policy for retiring city employees. Wilson said he developed the policy after learning O'Donnell would be retiring. Under the policy, an employee who retires with at least 10 years of service to the city and has reached the Iowa Public Employees Retirement System (IPERS) retirement age of 55, would be eligible to receive \$50 per day for any unused



Assistant Police Chief Donnie Orr

sick leave. An employee with 15 years of service and at least 55 years old, could receive a \$100 per day reimbursement for any unused sick leave. Wilson said employees can accumulate up to 120 days of sick leave. The policy goes into effect immediately.

In final action, the council approved a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Administration, objecting to new flood maps that have

been developed. The maps have drawn criticism from many local governments because of apparent discrepancies between the elevations they project for future flooding events and the level of floodwaters that were recorded during the 2008 flooding.

During a meeting earlier this year, the council met with John Meyer, French-Reneker Associates, Fairfield, and agreed to compose a letter objecting to the new maps. City

officials and Meyer said the new maps identified areas of the community as within the 100-year flood zone even though they were dry in 2008. Meyer said most descriptions he had seen for that flood identified it as a 500-year event. During an earlier meeting with other local officials in Wapello, Meyer and the Columbus Junction officials had reported similar complaints from other communities.

H1N1 Vaccines to be available to all Iowans beginning December 14th.

LOUISA County continues to encourage those at highest risk of complications to make sure they are vaccinated.

Vaccine allocations have increased; therefore it is possible to expand the people eligible to be vaccinated past the initial target priority groups to the general population.

Children who are 9 years of age and under should be sure they receive

two doses of the H1N1 vaccine in order to provide complete protection against the virus.

H1N1 is not gone.

While Iowa continues to see a decline in influenza-like illness, H1N1 continues to circulate in Iowa.

Public health officials predict another wave of H1N1 illness will occur after the holidays. This would coincide with what is typically the

time Iowa sees the highest rates of influenza activity - January and February.

It's not too late to be immunized.

Being immunized as soon as possible will get LOUISA County residents protection against this possible third wave of illness. It will also prevent them from spreading this virus to other.

Being immunized now will offer

protection over the holidays, when many LOUISA County residents travel.

Louisa County Public Health has both H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine available and will hold additional vaccination clinics throughout the county during the next week. Please check your local paper for clinic dates and locations.

Briefly -

Tonight is Columbus City Family Christmas Night

Columbus City will hold their annual Family Christmas Night today, December 16th from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Columbus Masonic Lodge. Santa will be arriving at 6:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Low Insurance to host CJPM

Low Insurance will be hosting CJ.P.M. on Tuesday, December 29, 2009 at the American Legion Building in Columbus Junction beginning at 5:00 p.m. Everyone is encouraged and welcome to attend.

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center.

Christmas Concert at Columbus Junction United Methodist Church

The public is invited to a Christmas Concert entitled "The Spirit of Christmas" tonight, Wednesday, December 16, 2009, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. at the Columbus Junction United Methodist Church. Come hear the wonderful sounds of Christmas music by local performers in the beautiful candle-lit sanctuary and enjoy fellowship and refreshments following the concert (no admission fee).

Empowerment Board to meet

The Des Moines/Louisa County Caring CommUNITY Empowerment Board will be meeting at the First Presbyterian Church, 801 Middle Street, Mediapolis, IA, today, Wednesday, December 16, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

Santa to visit Ainsworth

Santa will visit the Ainsworth Opera House at 284 Railroad Street, Ainsworth, IA on Saturday, December 19, 2009. He will be there from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Craft tables, pictures, refreshments and a talk with Santa on Saturday. Hope to see you there.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, December 17th at 11:30 at the home of Shirley Finke for a potluck dinner. Each member, please bring a dish to pass.

Student Council Food Drive

The High School Student Council is holding a Non-perishable Food Drive from now until December 18th. All food collected will be given to MCSA (Muscatine Center for Social Action). The winning AAT will have a pizza party and ice cream. Students should bring their non-perishable food to their AAT teacher. Also, the High School Student Council will be selling Candy Grams during AAT for students to give to friends and family members through December 18th. Those will be delivered on December 22nd. A Candy Gram is a candy cane attached to a cut out note that the person buying the Candy Gram can write a note on to the receiving person. They will be delivered to the receiving students on Tuesday, December 22nd. The cost is \$0.75 for 1 Candy Gram or 2 Candy Grams for \$1.00.

Washington Conservation Center Holiday Hours

The Washington County Conservation Education Center at Marr Park will be closed December 24, 25, 26 and January 1 for the holidays. The Center will, however, be open December 27 - 31, including Tuesday and Wednesday of that week.

Community Health Centers of Southeastern Iowa, Inc. (CHC / S E IA) is pleased to announce the new facility construction has begun! You are invited to attend the CHC / S E IA Louisa County Clinic "Non-Ground Breaking, Ground Breaking" Event. Details of the new facility project will also be presented. Hosted by the Columbus Junction Community Club. With Mayor of Columbus City, Mark Shear Thursday, December 17, 2009 12:45 PM Columbus Junction Senior Center, 115



It is the Mission Statement of CHC / S E IA to provide affordable, comprehensive, culturally appropriate, cost effective primary health care to residents of the greater Southeastern Iowa region, especially those individuals/families with limited resources or with other barriers to health care, in order to improve their overall health status. For questions or further information, please call: (319) 753-2300