



## An Eventful Christmas By: Joyvonna Perr

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Whether you enjoy plays, movies, tree lighting, ice skating, concerts and more, Huntsville is the place to find all this quality eventful Christmas entertainment.

Start your week with the Galaxy of Lights at the Huntsville Botanical Gardens. The drive through nights are November 24<sup>th</sup>- December 31<sup>st</sup> at 5:30-9pm. Admission is charged.

Visit Mrs. Claus and Santa's home at the Alabama Constitution Village through December 23<sup>rd</sup> where older and young children alike can see Santa.

Go see The

Nutcracker performed by the Huntsville Ballet Company with music by the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra coming to you December 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> 2012. For more info call 256-539-0961. Tickets are needed. Critics say this show is both magical and gorgeous.

Watch the Living Christmas Tree December 13<sup>th</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup> at First Baptist Church on Governor's Drive, these features 175 singers and a 60 piece orchestra, which makes up a wonderful Huntsville tradition.

Enjoy a NEACA Christmas craft show, December 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>

featuring over 225 crafts. The show is held at the Von Braun Center. The times are Friday and Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., and Sunday 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Go up to Burritt on the mountain and enjoy tally ho! A journey into Monte Sano's past happening now through January 6<sup>th</sup> 2012. Go to Burritt on the Mountain's website for more holiday fun for your families. <http://www.burrittonthemountain.com/>

Listen to the play The Christmas Story on December 6<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> at the Von Braun Center, this show is based on the classic motion picture.



There are many more Christmas events. Be sure to check out websites and more information about your local holiday events.

# The Story of Santa Claus

By Abby Lankford



The story of Santa Claus is from a man named St. Nicholas. He was born in Lycia, Greece in the third century. His parents raised him in a devoted Christian family, and taught him to be generous and serve others. He had a reputation of secretly giving gifts to the poor, loving children, and he was concerned for sailors who worked under difficult conditions.

Nicholas was persecuted for his faith under the Roman Emperor Diocletian. He passed away on December 6, in the year 343. After his death a legend began which said that manna, the substance God miraculously provided to keep the Israelites alive during their 40 years in the desert, formed on his grave. It was said that this manna could heal illnesses.

For years people told of his generosity and love for children. It gradually developed into Santa Claus. December 6<sup>th</sup> was celebrated as the festival of St. Nicholas.

The name Santa Claus however came from the Dutch's form of "Saint Nicholas." The Dutch in particular are credited with reviving St. Nicholas as the 'gift bringer'. Sinterklaas is the Dutch form of St. Nicholas.

When the Dutch settled in New York the legend followed. In 1773 the name 'St. A Claus' was in an American newspaper. Once the New York Historical Society was founded in 1804 with Nicholas as its patron saint, the legend was embellished with additions such as flying reindeer and a sleigh full of gifts.

Later on Thomas Nast formed even more details in the Christmas editions of Harper's Magazine in 1860 to 1880. Nast drew him round and jolly, in a dark green coat at his workshop in the North Pole checking his nice and naughty list.

The Coca Cola Company used this jolly gentleman for advertising in 1931. They drew him wearing red and white, the Coca Cola Company's colors. This is the image of St. Nicholas that has lived on for years.



## Editorial: Your inside scoop on Christmas shopping

**BY: Joyvonna Perr**

Christmas is the most exciting, yet stressful, holiday of the year and that stress leads up to one thing called shopping.

Christmas shopping normally begins on November 10<sup>th</sup> - December 24<sup>th</sup> when all the sales start rolling in your local stores.

Rest assured, people made official days of sales; one of the biggest sales days is Black Friday. Black Friday starts mostly at 12pm and goes all night. Some of the best sales are known to happen on this particular Friday. Black Friday is such a big sale day that all retail stores participate in it, such as Wal-Mart, Sears, Kmart, Macy's and many more. No matter how old or young you are, you still can participate in this huge sales event.

Even Bridge Street participates in Black Friday, and people from Canada even cross borders for huge sales. Although Black Friday started in the

1960s, it just recently got popular in the last two decades. Missing sleep is worth this huge sales event to many shoppers.

If you're out of town on Black Friday, that's not a problem; they also made a sale called Cyber Monday. Obviously from the name "cyber," meaning "computer," this sales event happens completely online. Retail stores everywhere with websites participate on Cyber Monday, which is the Monday after Thanksgiving.

Do you have a television series you have been waiting for online? If it is too expensive, just wait till Cyber Monday, and get it then. Worried about shipping? Don't sweat it; stores offer the ship to store policy. When your local store receives it, you can pay the price there. Cyber Monday has been noticed for the conveniences of shopping at home, another store, or just anywhere.



Only on Cyber Monday can you get a new \$900 dish washer for only \$215. Shop Cyber Monday and you won't be sorry.

Don't know what to buy? That's OK; just go with the normal gifts such as gift baskets, gift cards, or an edible arrangement. Just because the fruit doesn't last long doesn't mean they don't taste delicious. For family or friends get them a nice set of pajamas and shoes, even a book they like. In the kids category I hear Furbys are very popular in the world of kids, as they bring in the old toys and make them new.

Although no matter how stressful shopping gets, we can't forget the real reason of Christmas- Jesus' birthday. You can help

organizations like The Salvation Army, Operation Christmas Child, and you can give Christian gifts.

Merry Christmas to one and all!



## Christmas for All

### By Abby Lankford

People in Madison County have many ways to help the needy during the holidays and two places that give assistance are the Salvation Army and the Downtown Rescue Mission.

The Salvation Army has the Angel Tree Program.

All the donations from the red kettles outside of stores go to needy families, seniors, and the homeless. These donations provide Christmas dinners, clothing, and toys for families in need. It also helps the families of prisoners.

“There are exactly 25 red kettles in Huntsville,” Salvation Army spokeswoman Judy Mason said

Shelters are open for sit-down dinners. Over a period of months after Christmas some families still get aid.

These are people struggling with difficult family, emotional or employment problems. Volunteers help give gifts to shut-ins in hospitals, and nursing homes.

Salvation Army brings light and love to those served so the real meaning of Christmas is not forgotten.

“Each winter season there are hundreds of volunteers!” Judy Mason said

Contact The Salvation Army at 2114 Oakwood Avenue Northwest Huntsville, AL 35810 or (256) 536-5576.

The Downtown Rescue Mission on Evangel Drive in Huntsville was open for families to sign up for toys November 26-27<sup>th</sup> in the Fellowship Hall.

To be eligible you must attend Thursday, December 20<sup>th</sup> to the Children’s Christmas Party at 4 to 7 p.m. The party will have Matt



Adams, a live worship band, crafts, pizza, cupcakes, and Christmas presents.

According to the Mission, last year 275 children received toys for Christmas. Without donations many children would go without anything for Christmas.

Christmas festivities top off on Christmas Day. Volunteers can come serve a meal and love on everybody who comes to eat. Much like Thanksgiving the guest is waited on just like they are in a restaurant. This holiday meal is a time to encourage and invest in people who have lost hope and cannot afford to eat anywhere else.

Volunteers can sign up for Christmas events Saturday, December 1<sup>st</sup>. Contact the Downtown Rescue Mission at (256) 536-2441.





## Editorial: Preparing for winter

By: Jaiyleana Perr



Last year Alabama received a lot of snow fall. Some would say it was the most snow Alabama has had. Some wonder if it is going to snow this year. In the case that it does snow here are some tips. Its important to be prepared in case of a storm. Everyone should know what to do for their own safety and the safety of others.

Last year everyone ran into the same problem. Some people didn't know how to handle the cold weather conditions. This can be really dangerous because some people didn't know how to drive in the winter weather. Last year there was a big wreck in Huntsville caused by

a truck sliding on the ice and hitting the guardrail.

One of the most important things to remember is to drive carefully. It is safer for everyone on the road to drive cautiously on an iced road. If more people drove safely on iced roads we would not have any bad accidents.

Most electric bills go up during winter. Here is a way to avoid that. You can save energy by wrapping an insulating blanket around your water heater. This brings your electricity noticeably down.

Use fans to circulate heat throughout the house. A ceiling fan can be used for this. Ceiling fan circulate heat when they are put in reverse. To put your fan in re-

verse there is a switch on the side of the motor you can push.

Use sunlight and your fireplace if you have one. The sunlight not only lights up your house but it heats it up. Make sure all of your vents are closed because if they are open they will just cancel each other out.

Another important thing to do is check your thermostat and see if it is working right. Your electric bill could sky rocket because your house was not the temperature you thought it was. Also its never fun for the ac to kick on in the middle of a winter night.

"This is actually the perfect time, headed into the cooling season or the heating season, you want

your unit serviced, checked out and make sure it's running good," Hernandez said. "That way at this point, while it's still low demand on heating, you don't want to get into a full blown heating and you have a major problem, says Russell Hernandez.



## Project Share Needs Your Help!

Help Keep the Elderly & Disabled Warm During the Winter

It's simple. Add \$1, \$5, or \$10 a month to your utility bill & help warm Madison County's elderly and disabled this winter.

**NEW**

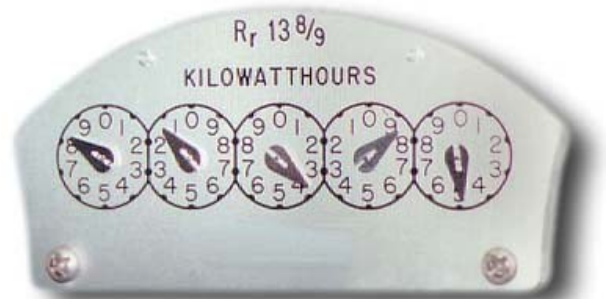
### Contribution Options

- When paying bill online indicate contribution amount in Project Share field ([www.hsvutil.org](http://www.hsvutil.org)).
- When paying bill by mail, drop box or in office, indicate the amount of your contribution in the Project Share field on remittance portion of invoice.
- To bank draft your contribution along with your monthly payment, please call 256-535-1200.
- To make a one-time donation mail your check to:

Project Share  
P.O. Box 2048, Huntsville, AL 35804



**100% of contributions go to help qualified applicants.**  
To qualify, participants must meet income eligibility requirements as specified by either the Alabama Dept. of Human Resources or the Alabama Dept. of Economic & Community Affairs, and be either 62 years of age or older or certified disabled. The Salvation Army screens potential recipients to determine eligibility.



## Editorial: Operation Share-the ones that care

By: Jaiyleana Perr

Operation Share is a charity for those who struggle with their electric bills. Cullman Electric Cooperative is the founder of Operation Share. Operation Share was founded on May 25, 1936. Every person can give 1 dollar minimum and it goes straight to a needy family's electric bill. They have 36,322 members and have given 20,027 people a warm house.

"Cullman EC's commitment is to our members and to our community. A commitment to innovation, service, value and the cooperative principles." According to the company website.

Cullman does not prioritize people. No one person is more important than another person. They do not show special treatment to other people. Cullman has a code that they go by.

Operation Share has made it their personal mission to make a difference in our economy.

"In today's economy there are many families that used to be fine that now [find] themselves struggling to make ends meet and keep their homes. I never want to take those basic necessities for granted,"

Operation Share spokeswoman Theresa Antolik said.

Many people's lives have been changed because of Operation Share. Jan L and her son's lives were dramatically changed. They had no idea how to survive but because of Operation share they were able to make it.

She wrote a letter to Operation Share that said "We wanted to thank you for your help during this extremely difficult divorce. My ex sits in luxury, while we struggle to live. One thing I must say on this horrific journey - we have met the most giving & kind people willing to help a mom and her 5 sons. Thank you again for your help." "- Jan L. and Sons."

Every kid wants a safe and warm home

Operation Share encourages people to give to the charity. If everyone gave a dollar each more people like Jan can be helped. It is Operation Share's goal to help people who are in need.

"At the end of the day you have a smile on your face and feel good that you are helping to make a difference for those in need. Help those in need and you will make a difference in the world, Nancy Pineiro, Miracle Team Member says.

## Editorial: New Year's Traditions

by Joel Kennedy



The promise of a brand new year is appealing to many of us, a fresh start, and new beginnings, what could be better? This particular holiday is flush with traditions interwoven into the very fabric of the day. The Eve is not forgotten in this, having its own pair of expectations for the night, many of which take place at the stroke of midnight; and here are just a few.

1. **The Midnight Kiss:** The reason you are supposedly supposed to kiss someone at midnight is because otherwise it is believed that the rest of the year means you will face a year of coldness and lack of affection.

2. **Food:** Some believe that if you eat black-eyed peas on New Year's Day it will attract good luck and fortune. Some also eat ham hocks, collard greens or even cabbage to bring in "luck". The food to stay away from? Chicken or turkey. It is believed that eating poultry will bring misfortune.

3. **New Clothes:** It is believed that if you do not wear new clothes on January 1st, you will not be receiving many new garments in the New Year. Red clothing is preferred for New Year's Day since red is considered a happy color, and is sure to attract a brighter future for the wearer.

4. **Making Noise at Midnight:** On New Year's Eve when the clock strikes midnight people blow on horns, cheer, set off fireworks. Why? It is believed that the loud noise scares away evil spirits. So, not only are you ringing in the New Year but you will be starting the new year free from evil.

5. **Direction of The Wind:** The direction of the wind on New Year's morning is said to predict prophesies about the coming year. Wind from the south, expect money and happiness. Wind from the north, foresees a year of foul weather. Wind from the east brings famine and bad luck, while wind from the west brings milk and fish, but the death of someone important. No wind however, equals joy and prosperity throughout the year.

However different these traditions, they all have one thing in common, to bring people together to celebrate something beautiful, the cycle of the earth depicted as a single rotation around the sun.



## Editorial: This Time Each Year

By James Haynes



"Turn up the light so we can see  
The redhead grandson on your knee  
You'd better hold him while you can

He'll be walking soon" ("This Time Next Year," Fernando Ortega)

"This Time Next Year," by Christian singer Fernando Ortega, is a terrific portrait of my family gatherings every Christmas. Not only is blond or red hair a common trait of Haynes children, but for one to say that my family, especially my father's side, is tight-knit would be an understatement.

Most every holiday and school break, a relative and his spouse and children will make the trip up (or down) to Cullman, Alabama, *my family's homeplace*. Christmas, especially, is a big deal.

Surrounded by fields farmed for scores of years, my grandparents and great-grandparents feed, house, entertain and are entertained by our diverse assembly of aunts, uncles, and cousins for a week or so.

"This time next year  
You'll want to take him  
Down the old road

Behind your house"

My grandparents have been cattle farming and gardening long before I was born. A veterinarian by trade, my granddad spends every chance he gets to spend time on the farm. Behind their house are cattle trails and paths cleared by a tractor and its "bush-hog." All the trails I remember being built in the back of the cow pasture were "weekend projects," also referred to by certain uncles as "forced labor" during a Christmas holiday.

This time next year  
There'll be stories to tell  
And he will listen to you  
Quiet in your arms

*One of the best stories is of the year* my dad's brother, his wife, and son spent Christmas morning with us while my dad was on active duty in Afghanistan. We had already had our annual extended family gathering the previous week, but would have had to spend the Christmas morning by ourselves if not for them. My mom said afterwards it was a show of true brotherly love, as my uncle took on the task of making pancakes, as my dad would have. To top it all off, that Christmas was a white Christmas. A day that started with pancakes and presents concluded with making snowmen and rolling down the snow-blanketed hill near our house on an old "All-Terrain" wagon.

My dad is home now, and my aunt, uncle and cousins now live in Michigan. But the memories are still there, and live on in the stories.

And there'll be songs to sing him  
While he goes to sleep  
When we gather in your home  
This time next year

It's always next year. Whenever the time comes to say our goodbyes, they are always punctuated with an, "We'll see you at Easter!" or "We'll see you at your brother's birthday party in a month!" There's always a looking-forward. Even when the family congregates, there's a looking back and an expectant prospect of fun times to come, and memories to be made. I don't think this Christmas will be any different.



## The Excalibur Times Reporters:

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Grant us, Father, hearts of worship  
At this time of Jesus' birth;  
We would see anew His glory  
Shine throughout this sin-cursed earth.

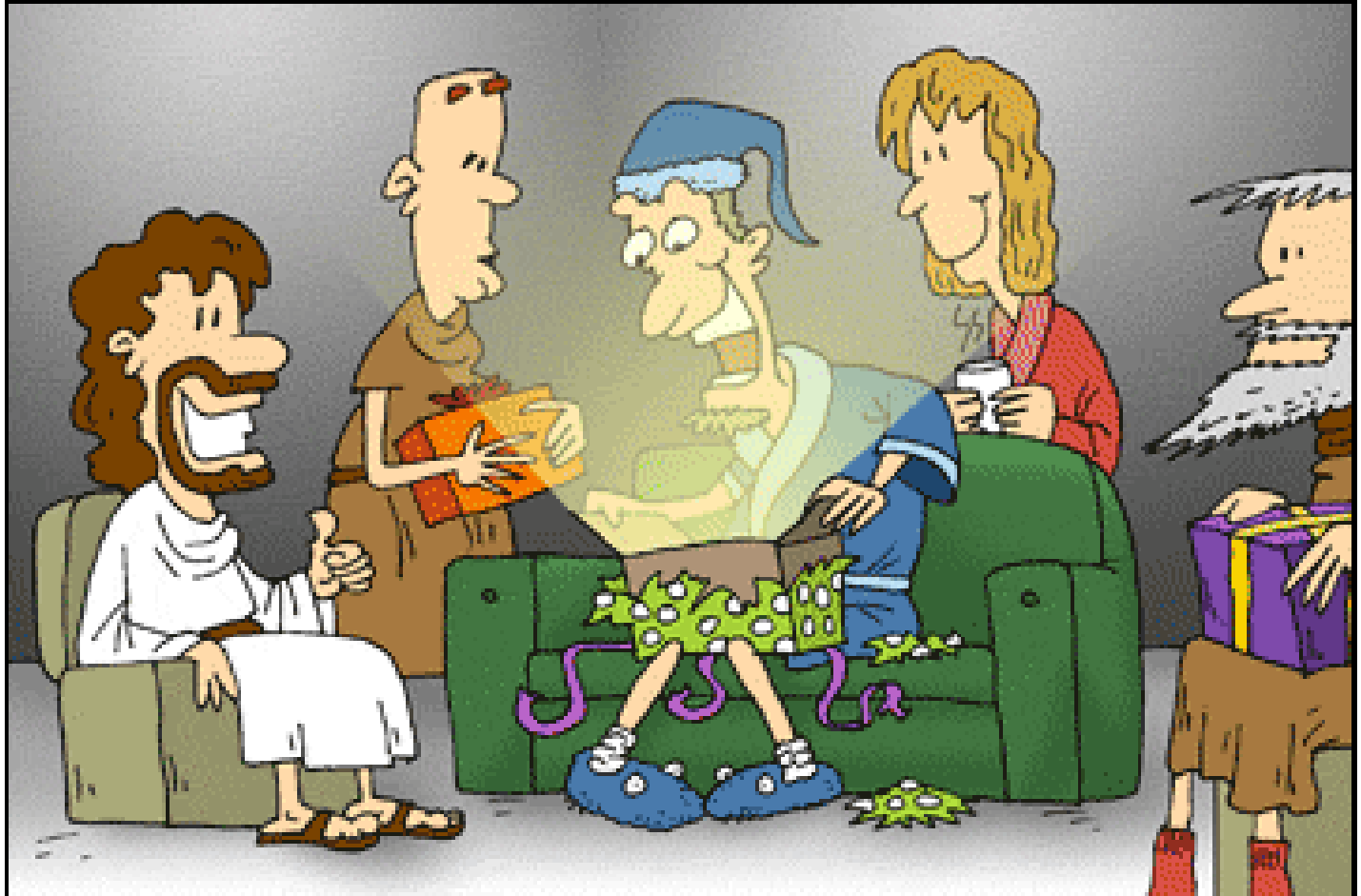
—D. De Haan

# Seniors 2013

**Senior Photos:** the last day of class for the fall semester, **December 6<sup>th</sup>**, is the deadline for senior portraits to be turned in to Excalibur for the graduation program, to the Excalibur yearbook team and to the Excalibur Times for the Senior Issue. Instructions with email addresses where Senior photos should be sent will be given later.

Guidelines for senior photos: generally senior portraits are formal head and shoulders shots, but for Excalibur purposes the photo subject should be seen at least from the waist up. The point of the senior photo is to see the student's face. Students can take a photo with an object/animal if that is part of their personality, such as with a horse, or an instrument they play. The photo may be casual or formal but must meet Excalibur dress code.

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Thanks to Andrew S.

12-21-2007

ETERNAL LIFE, MY FAVORITE ... THANKS  
JESUS!