

DECEMBER 2019

CLIFTON PARK

Neighbors

AN EXCLUSIVE MONTHLY
PUBLICATION FOR RESIDENTS



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Judd Family



Best Version Media

Cover photo by Tara Wiley Photography

CLIFTON PARK *Neighbors*

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Please contact Jenna Caputo at jcaputo@bestversionmedia.com for information on how to submit ideas, articles, updates, reminders, events, high-resolution photos and more. We will do our best to include as much community information as we can within our space limitations.

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I Believe!

Some folks think I'm crazy to still believe in Santa Claus after all these years, but I do! I believe he comes around every year showering us with his goodness and holiday spirit. He may not always look like our red cheeked, roly-polly bearded saint, but he shows up every year in the people around me. I see more gratefulness, more patience, more generosity and humility at this time of year than at any other, and I truly love it! I see the spirit of Santa in everyone around me and I hope you do too!

So, as you get ready for the shopping and wrapping - think local - and help keep our family businesses going, like the Judds of Time Square, this month's cover story. When you're cleaning and decorating, don't worry about perfection, make it fun - like finger painting ornaments with the kids... we show you how in this issue. As you plan out the menus, welcome your vegans and vegetarians with some holiday specials like the ones we showcase on these pages. Ready for the gifting and receiving? Don't forget those less fortunate by supporting your local charities, like the VFW, the Salvation Army and the others we cover here. Most of all, relax and enjoy the many special blessings the holidays bring - notes from old friends, goodies from neighbors, hugs from family and gifts all around! Stop worrying over having everything perfect and celebrate the season, for all the right reasons, with those you love!

P.S. Don't forget to share the love with us by sending us a note via email or snail mail or posting your notes/pics on our Facebook page (@CPNeighbors) so we can all share in your joy and happiness and spread the good news!

Wishing you all a wonderful, happy holiday from our team to you and yours!
-Barb

Barb
Publisher



Jenna
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No One Does More for Veterans

By David Brinkmoeller

Dear Ms. Caputo,

My name is Dave Brinkmoeller and I am the Post Commander of The Clifton Park-Halfmoon Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1498. I wanted to make you and hopefully your readers, aware of some of the things our post does to provide for our active military as well as our veterans. The motto of the VFW is, "No one does more for Veterans," and our post strongly believes in these words. This marks the fifth year that our post has worked with Haband to deliver much needed winter clothing to the Stratton Veterans Medical Center in Albany. As of last year, we have donated over \$71,000 in new clothing to their Voluntary Services for distribution to our veterans who are in need. This year, our members brought up over 18,000 pounds of clothing including over sixty pairs of winter lined TOTES boots. I have not been given the final value, but it was estimated at close to \$20,000.

Over the last five years, we have also sent care packages to units from the 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum. Once again, we have been requested to remember a platoon just deployed to Afghanistan. All of our members feel it is our duty to provide for all who serve.

This November will be extremely busy for our members as we carry out our semi-annual Poppy Drive and attend various functions at the Shen schools. We will also be collecting the essays written by Shen students and then judge the essays, presenting students who may qualify with cash awards. These students are then allowed to advance to District, State and National completion.

I hope that you would consider discussing our post for possible local recognition.

Sincerely,
Dave Brinkmoeller



Dear David and the Entire Team at the VFW:

We truly appreciate hearing from you and agreed that we should share this wonderful news. We can't thank you all enough for your hard work and continued efforts on behalf of our nation's veterans and active duty military.

Sincerely,

Jenna Caputo and Barb Schrader, *Clifton Park Neighbors*

Welcome to the Neighborhood

By Pete Bardunias, President/CEO, the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County

Code Ninjas
(15 Park Ave,
Shoppers

World, 518-400-2013, codeninjas.com/locations/ny-clifton-park), a learning center dedicated to helping young people learn practical aspects of computer programming, math, logic and problem solving skills, opened in downtown Clifton Park this summer. By helping to prepare students for careers here in Tech Valley and beyond, Code Ninjas helps fill a vital need in preparing our workforce of tomorrow. On September 7, the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County cut the ceremonial ribbon, assisted by Senator Jim Tedisco, Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh, Clifton Park Town Supervisor Phil Barrett and Deputy Chief Information Security Officer, NYS Office of Information Technology Services Deborah Snyder. Visit their website to learn more! ■



Stewarts
Shops
(www.stewartsshops.com)

has been renovating and expanding its numerous convenience stores, and they gave their treatment to the one at the intersection of Grooms and Vischer Ferry Road late this summer, along with a generous donation to the Southern Saratoga YMCA. Great new gas pumps, more convenient entry and access, an improved and larger store and best of all, the same proximity to the Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve mean that this Stewarts is well suited to serve your needs. Pick up a bag of charcoal sometime and take it (and lunch) to the picnic area along the Mohawk in the Preserve. Or just enjoy the warm coffee and tasty ice cream. ■





Big Dreams on the Horizon for Henry Liu

By Christine Matthews

Brown School fourth grader Henry Liu has been attending the historic educational institution since nursery school. This year his younger brother joined the student body as well by entering kindergarten.

"I like the teachers at Brown School. They teach me not only all new subjects, but also how to be a nice, confident person," said Liu. "We have small classes. The teachers always give us a lot of attention and help when we need it - they are like my family."

Liu reveals that math has always been his favorite subject in school because he likes to play with numbers and use them to solve word problems.

His favorite part of the school day is recess when he can get outside with friends and classmates for soccer and football. "It is very refreshing to get fresh air in the middle of the day," said Liu.

Outside of school, Liu likes to swim, play tennis and ski in the winter. But hands down, Liu says that hockey is his favorite sport and has become a big part of his life. He attends practice three days a week and usually plays two games during the weekends. "My teammates and I challenge each other even during practice, but we are friends off the ice. We practice together,



win together and lose together - I hope we can win our first game of the season this year," said Liu.

Sidney Crosby is Liu's athletic role model. "He is one of the best hockey players in the NHL history. His moves are full of imagination and he always gets most of the goals for his team



during the game," said Liu. "I like him because he achieves these skills by continuous practice. He shot millions of times in his basement and even broke the wall. He teaches me to never give up if you want to achieve your dreams."

Looking toward his own future, Liu confides that he'd like to become a doctor. One time when he was very sick with a serious headache and high fever, his parents drove him to urgent care. He thought the doctors that treated him were very nice and professional. "I want to be like them someday to help sick kids become healthy again," said Liu. ■

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The Judd Family Connecting in Person with the Community & Beyond

By Jenna Caputo/ Photography by Tara Wiley

Peter Judd believes in the importance of face-to-face relationships, both in the business world and beyond. There is nothing quite like that in-person contact that allows meaningful relationships and true customer service. “I would like to impress upon the younger generations the importance of local community and the importance of shopping local,” he says. “I am afraid that there will come a day where there will be no local shops and personal service. The impersonal deliveries of products from an army of little trucks on the street just cannot replace the charm and value of a visit to a local establishment. We need to keep the connection, the relationships and the local talents. For a community to thrive, we need to come together and support each other!”

This frame of mind was instilled in both Peter and his wife, Monica, from a young age. Peter was born in Amsterdam, NY and grew up on Galway Lake, racing sailboats from the age of 8 to 20. He loved canoeing and played baseball, basketball, golf and tennis, and enjoyed travelling with his family.

Monica was born in Minneapolis, MN and enjoyed spending time with her family camping, hiking and walking the dogs. She

also had a passion for horseback riding, riding on the college team while at SUNY Oswego.

Peter and Monica met on their lunch break while both working in a bank after college. “She had some bizarre German meal,” says Peter, “and she intrigued me from the start. I knew then and there that she was the one. She wasn’t quite as impressed with me, so it took a couple of weeks to win her over. We shared a cash vault at our bank branch, and we dated in secret for a couple of months before we became engaged.”

In November of 1979, Monica’s parents, Bernie and Jutta von Schwerin opened their store, Time Square Watch & Clock Shop, in Clifton Park when they moved to Rexford. The idea took off and they opened other stores in various areas over the next several years but found that their full-service concept wasn’t working as well in the stores where they couldn’t be there to personally manage the training, service and quality control. They decided to sell off the satellite stores and Peter and Monica purchased the Plattsburgh location when they married in 1985. They operated that store until the mall closed in 1994, and they decided to move

back to the Capital District. In 2006, they bought the Clifton Park store, allowing Monica's parents to retire while Peter and Monica continued to build the business.

Over the years, Peter received valuable retail and customer service training, both from his prior jobs and by working closely with Monica's parents. They taught him all the ins and outs of running a small business and how to survive life as a sole proprietor, in addition to the watch services and engraving they offer in the store every day. While Peter enjoys selling products, the real joy of the store is working with all their regular customers and finding new ways to impress them each day. He has found that face-to-face service is essential to the community. "The very sad reality is that shopping is out of fashion. It has become too easy to sit at home and buy things on your phone in your pajamas. Luckily, our store is more than retail sales. We provide essential services that you cannot get over the internet. Changing watch batteries, sizing watchbands and engraving, are all services that Amazon cannot deliver." This year is the store's 40th Anniversary, and they plan to celebrate throughout the year with special sales and giveaways.

In addition to the store, the Judds run Judd Engraving and Promotional Products, helping businesses with their engraving needs, and are long-time members of the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County. As with anything else, Peter has found that personal, lasting relationships are the best. "I try to remain active, finding the small-town chamber to be a very easy-going place to meet and socialize with other local businesspeople. As a founding member of

our Chamber Leads group, I find that it is much easier to network with people you know and trust. I'm in this for the long run and I find that business prospers best when relationships are nurtured over time," he observes.

Monica is also a full-time science teacher at Iroquois Middle School in Niskayuna and is involved with the Saratoga Therapeutic Equine Program (STEP). STEP is a charitable organization established in 1986 to provide physical therapy to special needs individuals through the use of horses. On most Friday mornings, Monica will bring a few of her middle school students to help with the care and feeding of the horses. They start at 6:45AM so they can be at school in time for the start of the day. "It's wonderful to watch the kids gain confidence as they become accustomed to handling the horses," says Monica. "A perfect way to start each Friday!" Some of her students have gone on to continue volunteering on their own and help out with the therapy lessons and barn chores, and even becoming an integral part of the program.

Their children, Alex (33) and Heidi (31), have gone on to lives of service as well. Alex is a Navy pilot who now lives with his wife, Kristen, (a Naval Helicopter Pilot) in Pensacola, FL. They spent four years in Virginia while Alex flew a C-2A Greyhound, a large twin-engine plane used to deliver both passengers and cargo to aircraft carriers, and Kristen flew the MH-60S Knighthawk helicopter, a Navy version of the Blackhawk. They then ended up with overlapping deployments in Bahrain for a few months before ending up in Florida as flight instructors for the new students.

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Alex also is participating in Legacy Flight airshows throughout the country. These are Navy exhibitions where a modern era plane flies in formation with vintage WWII planes in recognition of the contributions made by those Naval aviators. Peter says, “We were fortunate enough to see Alex fly in the Rochester Airshow in August. It was a very proud experience for Monica and me to be there and watch our Fly Boy perform in front of the huge crowd!”

Alex enjoys living in the beautiful Gulf Coast, but always looks forward to their trips back to the Capital District. “I worked in the family store in high school and while home from college and still enjoy stopping in to see the new inventory when I’m in town. Kristen and I have always loved getting the sailboat or the canoe out on the lake at Galway – we only wish we weren’t 1400 miles away so we could do it more often!” says Alex.

Heidi always wanted to work with horses and other animals and eventually went to school at Cornell and Tufts to become a veterinarian. Between her undergrad and grad work, she connected with a vet in Uganda through the Christian Veterinary Mission, an organization that sends veterinarians all over the world. Travelling to Karamoja in Uganda, Heidi was able to use her veterinary knowledge to help train local Community Animal Health Workers, who acted as the tribe’s “Vets.” “Through this work, the group has been able to establish connections between warring sub-tribes, and over time, they have built ‘peace villages’ where they live together and even inter-marry, which was previously unheard of,” she explains.

Her work both in Uganda and with farm animals here in the states has provided many exciting stories over the years. “One time in Uganda, an open-bedded truck carrying about 30 cows had tipped over into a pond. As Dr. Val and I drove by we quickly pulled over and leaped out of the car to help, both wearing our traditional skirts as was the Karamojong custom. Balancing on the bars of the truck, waist-deep in the water, we started cutting free the living cows and passing them over to the locals who were helping bring them to shore. Just another day in Uganda! Life is a bit more tame these days, but I still love working with animals and

helping the humans who come with them,” says Heidi.

Large animals were always her passion, but now that she’s a mom, Heidi is currently working at a small animal clinic in Shrewsbury, MA close to home. Her family now includes her husband, Cesar, an engineer at the software company, MathWorks, and their son, Aiden (16 months), who is following in his father’s footsteps, already a pro at navigating any phone or tablet he can get his hands on! Cesar has been an integral part of the family store as he troubleshoots the entire family’s technology challenges. “We love to all work together as a family and utilize each other’s strengths, though I have to say, Cesar’s strengths seem to come in handy the most!” jokes Heidi.

Peter still loves to travel, especially with family, and often tries to pick trips based on nature, looking for time spent on mountains or water. One of his favorite trips was to Newfoundland, where they went on an ocean kayaking adventure to see an island that had one of the world’s largest breeding colonies of puffins. They spent a few hours kayaking around the island, surrounded by the puffins and jumping dolphins, then turned their boats back toward shore. “On the way across the bay, I spotted the spouting of a whale in the distance. Heidi and I were in a tandem kayak, and I shouted to her to paddle hard toward the breaching whale. Seeing us change course, Alex and Monica followed close behind. The whale was now under water, and we had no clue if we would see it again, but then his head popped up within twenty feet of our kayak. We were able to look directly into the eye of the whale. He was looking at us and checking us out, at the same time that we were marveling at how close he had surfaced and how large, quiet and calm he was being. He swam alongside for just a couple of breaths, and then he dove deep and was gone,” says Peter.

Back at home, Peter and Monica enjoy golfing; tennis; wandering the streets of Saratoga to take in the atmosphere of crowds, galleries and local shops; and enjoying the simple pleasures of spending time with family and friends at their lake house... connecting. ■



The Importance of Home Inspections

By Willie Miranda

You meet with an agent who shows you a handful of homes. You find one and fall in love with it! Yup, it's your dream home and you will do anything to ensure that it becomes yours! However, you ponder whether or not a home inspection is necessary. Here are five reasons why it's imperative to get a home inspection before you buy!



Don't Judge a Book By Its Cover – Regardless of the age of the structure, it's critical to get a home inspection. There can be issues that are not visible to the average buyer. Plumbing, wiring and structural issues are items that can be costly but not necessarily seen at a showing. In order to avoid this, you will need to get a New York Licensed Home Inspector to view the property.

Know What You're Buying – This is probably the largest emotional and financial purchase you will make in your lifetime, so take the time to research it, as you would any other major purchase. The more you know, the fewer the surprises there will be down the road.

Save Time and Money – Home Inspection costs can vary depending on a variety of reasons: the inspector you use, whether or not you test for radon, if you have a well and/or septic that needs to also be looked at, etc. However, spending the money to hire an inspector up front will save you a lot of time and money down the road. Think of this – it's a lot cheaper than paying an electrician to rewire your entire house.

Negotiate – When you enter into a purchase contract, the home inspection allows you to gather information on the property that

may allow for some negotiations. Depending on the issues that arise during the inspection, the sellers may offer you a credit at closing to fix the problems or provide you with a bargaining chip to possibly lower the purchase price. It also is a means of protection, too. If, for some reason, there is a structural defect to the property that is more than \$1,500, this will allow you to back out of the contract without risk of losing your deposit.

Seller's Repairs – If the seller is not willing to offer a credit at closing and/or deduct money off of the purchase price, then they may offer to get their own estimates and have the work completed by a licensed professional. Having a home inspection is the only way to protect you from potentially spending a great deal of money and many hassles in the long run. ■

If you're thinking of buying a home and would like a FREE copy of my book, *What Every Person Needs To Know About Buying a Home in the Capital District*, please visit www.518BuyerBook.com or call 518-376-1073.



Willie Miranda

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The Origin of The Salvation Army Red Kettle

By The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army Captain in San Francisco had resolved, in December of 1891, to provide a free Christmas dinner to the area's poor persons. But how would he pay for the food?

As he went about his daily tasks, the question stayed in his mind. Suddenly, his thoughts went back to his days as a sailor in Liverpool, England. On the Stage Landing, he saw a large pot, called "Simpson's pot," into which charitable donations were thrown by passersby.

On the next morning, he secured permission from the authorities to place a similar pot at the Oakland ferry landing, at the foot of Market Street. No time was lost in securing the pot and placing it in a conspicuous position, so that it could be seen by all those going to and from the ferry boats. In addition, a brass urn was placed on a stand in the waiting room for the same purpose.

Thus, Captain Joseph McFee launched a tradition that has spread not only throughout the United States, but throughout the world.

By Christmas, 1895, the kettle was used in 30 Salvation Army locations in various sections of the West Coast area. *The Sacramento Bee* of that year carried a description of the Army's Christmas activities and mentioned the contributions to street corner kettles. Shortly afterward, two young Salvation Army officers who had been instrumental in the original use of the kettle, William A. McIntyre and N.J. Lewis, were

transferred to the East. They took with them the idea of the Christmas kettle.

In 1897, McIntyre prepared his Christmas plans for Boston around the kettle, but his fellow officers refused to cooperate for fear of "making spectacles of themselves." So McIntyre, his wife and sister set up three kettles at the Washington Street thoroughfare in the heart of the city. That year the kettle effort in Boston and other locations nationwide resulted in 150,000 Christmas dinners for the needy.

In 1898, the *New York World* hailed The Salvation Army kettles as, "the newest and most novel device for collecting money." The newspaper also observed, "There is a man in charge to see that contributions are not stolen."

In 1901, kettle contributions in New York City provided funds for the first mammoth sit down dinner in Madison Square Garden, a custom that continued for many years. Today, donations to Salvation Army kettles at Christmas time support holiday meals for homeless and needy families, but also help The Salvation Army serve 30 million people through a myriad of other services all year long. These include:

- **Disaster Response Services**, which include assisting survivors of natural and man made disasters to recover and rebuild their lives
- **Social Service Programs** providing food, shelter, clothing and financial assistance

• **Casework and Counseling**, with programs for health care and residential assistance and abuse counseling

• **Youth Services**, with programs for music, athletics, arts and crafts, camping and family counseling



• **Senior Centers**, focused on assisting the needs of older adults, including eight Silvercrest centers where seniors' assistance is partially subsidized by federal government dollars

• **Christmas Programs**, in which the famous Red Kettles are a centerpiece, to help families and individuals financially at the year's end with toys, meals and other assistance

• **Human and Sexual Trafficking Advocacy**, where Army officers and staff are focused on public policy in Washington, D.C., and providing services and advocacy for victims of this international crime.

Kettles now are used in such distant lands as Korea, Japan and Chile, as well as in many European countries. Everywhere, public contributions to the kettles enable The Salvation Army to bring the spirit of Christmas to those who would otherwise be forgotten all year long – to the aged and lonely, the ill, the inmates of jails and other institutions, the poor and unfortunate. In the United States, kettles at Thanksgiving and Christmas, although changed since the first utilitarian cauldron set up in San Francisco, help make it possible for The Salvation Army to do the most good possible for 30 million people each year. ■



Acorn Squash Stuffed with Quinoa, Cranberries and Orange Juice

by Meg Wert

- 1 large acorn
- ½ cup quinoa
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 cup sliced celery
- ½ medium onion diced (I used red onion)
- ⅓ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup orange juice
- Salt and pepper to taste



Preheat your oven to 350°F.

Take one large acorn and slice both ends off.

Next cut it into 1/2 inch wide slices (this should yield four rounds).

Remove all seeds from the centers. Place on a baking sheet and lightly pepper, then bake for 25 minutes at 350 F.

When ready, a fork should be able to come out clean but the acorn will still be a bit firm.

In a medium saucepan, drizzle olive oil and sauté the celery and onion.

Lightly salt and pepper, then reduce heat when translucent (about 5 to 7 minutes).

Add ⅓ cup dried cranberries and 1 cup vegetable broth to the pan.

Next add in ½ cup quinoa and return to high heat stirring consistently. (you need to be attending the pan at this point).

When it reaches a full boil and you notice the liquid reducing, turn the temperature to low and add 1/2 cup of orange juice.

Place a lid over the pan, removing occasionally to stir.

This may take 15 to 20 minutes before it's ready.

When the quinoa is done scoop the quinoa mixture into the center of each acorn round and place back into the oven at 350°F for another 10 minutes.

Fresh Cranberry Sauce:

- 8 ounces of fresh cranberries
 - ½ cup orange juice
 - ½ cup sugar
- Place ingredients into a food processor or blender and blend thoroughly.

***This cranberry sauce has a bright tart flavor. ■

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“PAWS” for Thought - Why You Shouldn't Give a Pet as a Holiday Gift

By Barb Schrader

There's nothing more adorable than a puppy with a red Christmas bow or a cute kitten popping out of a holiday gift box, but it may not be the best idea to gift a pet at Christmas.

Pets are not toys! Unlike toys, games and clothing, pets can't just be returned if they aren't the right color or we get bored with them. Once you've brought the pet home, they are your responsibility for the next 10-20 years! These are living, breathing animals that have needs and emotions just like we do, but each year, thousands of pets who are given as gifts are surrendered to animal shelters and at an increased rate just after the holiday season.

Pets need time and attention! When a pet is introduced to the home, they need to acclimate. They need your time and attention. It can be traumatic anytime they are introduced to a new environment, but especially



during the crazy busy holiday season when there are poisonous plants, breakable decorations, loud music and more people in and out than usual.

Pets need training, exercise and daily care! Is the person you are giving this pet to ready for that responsibility? Puppies and kittens are cute until they have an accident on your new rug, scratch or chew on the furniture, bark, jump and cry. They need to be potty trained

and exercised, fed and brushed, and not to mention the litter box will need changing, the dog bed will need cleaning and the list goes on. Remember, the adult in the house is ultimately responsible for all of this, no matter “whose” pet it is.

Pets cost money! From the initial supplies like collars, leashes, dog beds and litter boxes to the regular food and treats to the vaccines and vet visits, it can all add up. Are you

ready for this?

Forbes estimates that the cost of caring for a cat will be “at least \$780 a year and \$16,800 over [the cat’s] possible 15-year existence.” For a larger dog, it estimates a price tag of “\$1,570 a year and, over a 12-year lifetime, [total costs] ranging from \$22,025 to upwards of \$82,929 for folks using dog walkers.” *Forbes’* high estimate for a small dog is even pricier!

If you are sure that you still want that “doggie in the window,” the best thing you can do is to have a family meeting where all of the issues are discussed together, from who will be responsible to what type of pet you are ready for. Then, wrap up the supplies you’ll need with a stuffed toy and a gift certificate – a promise to go to the shelter as a family, AFTER the holidays, to find just the right pet to give a loving home to! You’ll be glad you did! ■

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Fingerpaint Christmas Tree Ornaments

By Jennafer Maselli

Looking for a cozy and creative way to get into the holiday spirit? This super easy craft is fun for kids and adults alike. These tree ornaments are great for gifts from the kids, a first house remembrance or Christmas party favors. They are personable and offer several different design possibilities. So grab your mug of hot cocoa, put on your favorite holiday tunes and get crafting!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Plain bulb ornaments - color of your choice
- Washable paint - at least red, white, and blue
- Sharpie markers - (various colors)
- Small paper plates
- Egg carton

MAKING THE ORNAMENTS:

To begin each design, set out the bulbs, as well as the paint you would like to use. Add a dollop of each color paint to a paper plate.

SNOWMAN:

- Use white paint. Dip your thumb into the paint so that your fingerprint is evenly covered.
- Press the paint coated part of your thumb onto to surface of the ornament to make the body of the snowman.
- You can repeat the process several times to add a midsection and head.
- Set aside in the egg carton to let dry.



SANTA:

- Use a red fingerprint first to make the main, round body of Santa.
- Use white paint next to add a head above the red fingerprint for the body.
- Set aside in the egg carton to let dry.

SNOWFLAKE:

- Use blue or white paint.
- Add fingerprint circles to the bulb, being sure not to make them too close together.
- Do half of the ornament then let dry in the egg carton before doing the other half.

FINISHING UP:

Once the paint on the bulbs has completely dried, it is time to finish the designs. Use Sharpie markers to draw in details such as the eyes, nose, mouth and limbs on your snowman and Santa ornaments. Similarly, use the markers to fill in the branching designs of the snowflakes. Some other fun suggestions to add to the ornaments are the year and who made it. You can also consider adding names to a snowman family or a cute message of good tidings for your guests to remember the event by. The possibilities are plenty, but the important part is to get the family together and enjoy the holiday cheer! ■

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DECEMBER 2019

SUNDAY, DEC 1

Great Train Extravaganza

@NEW YORK STATE CONVENTION CENTER, EMPIRE STATE PLAZA, ALBANY
Dozens of vendors offering new and used trains for sale, plus parts, clothing, memorabilia, photographs and accessories. Numerous exhibitors showing off all kinds of pieces of railroad history and artifacts. Several operating model railroads in N, HO and O gauges, LEGO and larger. A Roaming Railroad that will take you on a ride around the Empire State Plaza Concourse. Roaming Railroad and giant Legos layout for the kids and grandkids.

TIME: 10am-4pm **COST:** Adults \$7 | Children (under 12) FREE

SUNDAY, DEC 1-22

Christmas Land, LLC

@CHRISTMAS LAND LLC, 3068 FURBECK ROAD, ALTAMONT
Enjoy an old-fashioned Christmas set on 26 acres overlooking the Helderberg Mountains including pictures with Santa and his elves, ornament decorating, horse drawn carriage and sleigh rides, Christmas music and lights display, train rides, local artisans and crafters, food and beverages, Christmas cookie decorating, kids activities, the Christmas Land Store and more!

TIME: 11am-6pm Saturdays and Sundays only **COST:** Adults FREE | Children's activities vary

WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY, DEC 4-8

Saratoga Festival of Trees

@SARATOGA SPRINGS CITY CENTER, 522 BROADWAY, SARATOGA SPRINGS
Please go to www.SaratogaFestivalofTrees.com for detailed information.

See below for the highlights:

WED, DEC 5

The Preview Reception of the Saratoga Festival of the Trees

The event will offer a fantastic

evening of food, drinks and cheer. Reservations required.

TIME: 6-8pm

COST: 35 & under \$65 | above 35 \$75

THUR-FRI, DEC 5-6 & SUN, DEC 8: Open Viewing for the Saratoga Festival of the Trees

The event is open to the community. General admission.

TIME: Thursday 4-10pm | Friday 2-6pm | Sunday 11am-2-pm

SAT, DEC 7

Family Day at Saratoga Festival of the Trees

Enjoy Family Day's general hours, Santa's Workshop, Breakfast with Santa and/or Sundaes with Santa. All proceeds from these events go to the Catholic Charities.

TIME: Family Day 11am-6pm | Santa's Workshop 8am-2pm | Breakfast with Santa seatings at 8am, 9:30am & 11am | Sundaes with Santa seating at 12:30pm

THURSDAY, DEC 5

Saratoga Springs Victorian Streetwalk

@VARIOUS LOCATIONS, SARATOGA SPRINGS

Come out for the 32nd annual Victorian Streetwalk brought to you by the Saratoga Springs Downtown Business Association. Broadway will close from 5:00 to 10:00 from the Route 50 arterial to the Spring Street intersection.

TIME: 6-10pm **COST:** FREE

THURSDAY, DEC 5

Holiday Business Speed Networking

@EMBASSY SUITES SARATOGA, 86 CONGRESS STREET, SARATOGA SPRINGS
The Savvy Professional Women's Group is reinventing the traditional networking event and is devoted to cultivating connections! Women throughout the Capital Region will be gathering

in Saratoga to experience the unique Holiday Business Speed Networking Event to benefit local charities. Participants can expect to connect with many business professionals, kick off the holiday season with a fun evening and help local charities!

TIME: 6:30-8:30pm

COST: \$35

THURSDAY, DEC 5-9

Upstate Dance Challenge

@GIDEON PUTNAM RESORT & SPA, 24 GIDEON PUTNAM ROAD, SARATOGA SPRINGS

Calling all dancers! Join in on four thrilling days of workshops, competitions, social dancing and fun activities. The focus this year is West Coast Swing, using a variety of modern and past styling techniques, and also included this year is Latin dancing and Lindy Hop. Don't know how to dance? No Problem! The Newcomer program welcomes beginners and is designed for dancers who have never competed before. Dancers of all ages and skill levels are welcome to participate. Visit <http://www.upstatedancechallenge.com> for more information or to register.

COST: Prices vary depending on workshops and/or dances attended

THURSDAY, DEC 5-12

Greetings! by Tom Dudzick

@CURTAIN CALL THEATRE, 210 OLD LOUDON ROAD, LATHAM

Celebrate the holidays with this festive comedy about a young man who brings home his Jewish atheist fiancée to meet his very Catholic parents at Christmas. An otherworldly miracle manages to bring them all together.

TIME: Thursdays 7:30-9:30pm | Friday & Saturday 8-10pm | Sunday 3-5pm

COST: Ticket prices vary

FRIDAY, DEC 6

Ballston Spa Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting

@MILTON AVENUE TO WISWALL PARK, MILTON AVENUE BALLSTON SPA
The BSPA's annual Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting steps off time is 6:30pm, proceeding on Milton Avenue and ending in Wiswall Park on Front Street with Santa lighting the Christmas tree. The parade has fire trucks, floats, animals, kids and Santa parading down the main street of the village. The Toys for Tots will be on hand to collect donations of new, unwrapped toys. BSHS singers and musicians and Union Fire Company band members perform carols on the street corners.

TIME: 6:30-8:30pm **COST:** FREE

FRIDAY, DEC 6

Tree Lighting and Holiday Fun

@GAVIN PARK, 10 LEWIS DRIVE, SARATOGA SPRINGS
A variety of holiday decorations will adorn the park to create a special evening. The local fire department will bring Santa to the park so he can visit with the children and provide a holiday surprise. The whole family will enjoy costumed characters including Frosty, Rudolph and magical elves. The event is free for the entire family with live holiday music, light refreshments, movies, crafts and more.

TIME: 6:15-8:30pm **COST:** FREE

FRIDAY, DEC 6

Dancing in the Woods Gala

@195 TROY SCHENECTADY ROAD, LATHAM

Come out to the 36th annual Gala to help benefit the Melodies Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders at the Bernard & Millie Duker Children's Hospital at Albany Med. The evening will feature a delectable gourmet menu, open bar and live enter-

tainment by The Blake Band. Attire is black tie.

TIME: 8:30pm

COST: DIW Honorary Committee \$300 | General Admission \$250 | Young Professional (40 & under) \$175

FRIDAY, DEC 6-12

Capital Holiday Lights in the Park

@WASHINGTON PARK, ALBANY

The 2019 edition of the Price Chopper/Market 32 Capital Holiday Lights is an all-new, drive-through spectacular with more than 125 displays and scenes in Albany's Washington Park. At the end of your drive join your favorite reindeer and friends as they bring fun and mystery to the holiday season. The Lake House is filled with crafts and refreshments. Santa will be there through Dec 23 to hear the holiday wishes of the little ones.

TIME: Sundays-Thursdays 6-9pm | Fridays & Saturdays 6-10pm

COST: \$20-\$125 depending on vehicle size

FRIDAY, DEC 6-7

The Nutcracker by Salzburg Marionette Theatre

@SARATOGA SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL, 1 BLUE STREAK BOULEVARD, SARATOGA SPRINGS

Hailing from Austria, the Salzburg Marionette Theatre is known for its famed artistic perfection, precision and meticulous costumes and stage design, delighting families worldwide since 1913. With humorous and imaginative staging and ballet scenes acted out in great detail, the Salzburg Marionettes will bring the story of Clara and The Nutcracker to the Saratoga Springs High School. This original production features live actors with their marionette "friends," bringing the beloved holiday tale to sparkling life while set to Tchaikovsky's beloved music.

TIME: 7pm

COST: Adults \$25 | Children (15 & under) \$15

SATURDAY, DEC 7-8

Northeast Ballet's The Nutcracker

@PROCTORS THEATRE, 432 STATE STREET, SCHENECTADY

Making its annual return to Proctors' main stage is everyone's favorite holiday ballet. Enter a world of Christmas dreams to the joyous music of Tchaikovsky in this annual year-end favorite. Join the Sugar Plum Fairy, the heroic Nutcracker Prince and the evil Rat King in this whimsical celebration of the season.

TIME: Saturday 7pm | Sunday 2pm

COST: \$20-\$49

MONDAY, DEC 9

Thermography Open House

@NORTHEAST THERMOGRAPHY-MEDICAL IMAGING CENTER, 2 CHELSEA PLACE, CLIFTON PARK

Come learn about what Thermography is all about, and the benefits of no contact, no radiation modality for early detection. Bring your friends and meet the friendly staff. Your questions will be answered along with a tour of our facility. 10% discount on thermal studies booked at event. Gift cards available.

TIME: 6-7:30pm **COST:** FREE

FRIDAY, DEC 11

Open Mic Night

@CM SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS, 1505 ROUTE 9, CLIFTON PARK

A call to all artists in the local area! Come to Open Mics in support of local artists. Bring your guitar, your sheet music, your clarinet, flute, poems, monologues or any of your favorite instruments! There will be mics, a piano and everything you need to plug in to show off what you've got as an artist! Or come and enjoy the show! They are also adding in Karaoke!

TIME: 7:30-9:30pm **COST:** FREE

FRIDAY, DEC 13-14

Santa's Play Land Open House

@QUICK RESPONSE RESTORATION, 2077 ROUTE 9, ROUND LAKE

For 19 years Quick Response has

been transforming their property into a magical winter wonderland for the holiday season. Take a ride on one of their "Quick Express" tractor drawn train rides or enjoy a horse and wagon ride. Children can also enjoy a selection of kiddie rides. Refreshments of cookies, popcorn and hot chocolate will be served at no charge.

TIME: 5:30-9pm **COST:** FREE

SATURDAY, DEC 14

Jingle Bell Run

@HALFMOON TOWN PARK, 162 NY-236, HALFMOON

The Arthritis Foundation's Jingle Bell Run is the original festive race for charity. Bring a team of friends, family and co-workers to run or walk. Get your jingle on and spread the Spirit of Yes: Yes to having fun and celebrating what you love. Yes to living life to the fullest. Yes to conquering arthritis for good. 100% of your registration fee and fundraising go to a great cause!

TIME: 8am-Noon

COST: Until Nov 1 \$30 | After Nov 1 \$35 | Kids' Run (12 & under) until Nov 1 \$15 | after Nov 1 \$20

FRIDAY, DEC 20

Candlelight Festival of Carols

@CHURCH OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, 400 SARATOGA ROAD, GLENVILLE

Gather your family and friends to be a part of this 2nd annual community festival to herald the holiday season put on by the Burnt Hills Oratorio Society. Experience the excitement of lifting your voice with others, accompanied by brass, organ and percussion.

TIME: 7-9pm

COST: Varies by age

SATURDAY, DEC 21-22

The Nutcracker

@TROMBLEY AUDITORIUM MAPLE AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL, 515 MAPLE AVENUE, SARATOGA SPRINGS

The School of the Arts is delighted to perform their first full

length adaptation. Guest artists include William Otto formerly of New York City Ballet, Johnny Martinez of Tango Fusion and SOA Alumnus Samuel Epstein. They will dance alongside 80 local students from the Saratoga, Capital and Vermont regions. Bring the whole family to this holiday favorite!

TIME: Saturday 6:30pm | Sunday 1pm

COST: \$15-\$30

TUESDAY, DEC 31

22nd Annual First Night Saratoga 5K Run

@SKIDMORE COLLEGE ATHLETIC COMPLEX, PERIMETER ROAD, SARATOGA SPRINGS

Begin the First Night celebration right by joining the run before the huge New Year's event! Start and finish on the beautiful Skidmore campus. No registration limit this year! Awards to the top three overall male and female finishers, and top three male and female finishers in each 5-year age division.

TIME: 5:30pm

COST: Before Oct 31 \$25 | Through Dec 23 \$35 | Day of Race \$40

TUESDAY, DEC 31

First Night Saratoga 2020

@DOWNTOWN SARATOGA SPRINGS
FIRST NIGHT SARATOGA IS NEW YORK'S LARGEST NEW YEAR'S EVENT OUTSIDE OF NYC!

As one of the oldest and largest First Night celebrations in the country, First Night is the most affordable, accessible, family-friendly, safe and exciting way to spend New Year's Eve in the region. Starting with the 5K road-race at Skidmore College, culminating with the fireworks in Congress Park at midnight, and packed full of live music, dance, comedy and magic in between, this event will be a highlight of your outgoing year.

COST: TBD

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