

## Winter Holiday Celebrations Around the World

By Julia Abbott

Although we all celebrate in different ways, the spirit of winter holds throughout the holidays. In Colombia, Christmas starts with the day of candles on December 7 (the day before the Immaculate Conception is celebrated). People fill their homes with candles. Lights decorate all corners of the country, creating beautiful decorations. Empanadas, arepas, and natilla are served. December 28 is the Colombian version of “April Fools.”

Christmas is filled with color in India. Many families go to midnight mass and later have dance-filled parties. Homes are decorated with colorful stars. People also make Indian sweets. Marzipan is especially delicious.



Isabelle Viguier shares a photo of last year's Christmas from her Paris apartment on the River Seine.



Families at the Hamm, Germany food and crafts fair look as if they are getting ready for an ice skating race outside the booths.

Photo by Robert Szkudlarek

### Senior Snapshot

#### Becky Upchurch Adapted to California Living After Growing Up in a Small Wyoming Town

By Luke Netzley

Imagine what it would be like growing up in a town of less than 500 people in the southeastern corner of Wyoming, and then moving to a bustling city of 90,000 on the California coast. Santa Monica resident Becky Upchurch did not have to imagine. Born in Torrington, Wyoming, and raised in the town of Lingle just 10 miles away, Becky enjoyed a childhood on her family's farm milking cows, gathering eggs, and enjoying fresh raspberries from her grandmother's garden.

“Now that I'm an adult and have kids and grandkids of my own, I look back and think it was a wonderful way to grow up,” Becky said. After graduating high school, she went on to pursue her education at a junior college in Torrington. Then, she completed the last two years of her degree at the University of Wyoming, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in accounting. There were no public accounting firms in Wyoming at that time, however, so Becky moved with her boyfriend to Phoenix and landed a job there.

After 10 years, her husband took a job in Santa Monica working for Charles Keating. The move proved to be difficult in more ways than one. It was 1987, and Becky was eight months pregnant. On top of that, she found it hard to adjust to the scale and pace of life in Santa Monica given her



Becky Upchurch

pastoral upbringing. “The city was huge, and I was even afraid to drive on the freeway,”

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### Do You Recognize This Neighborhood Celebrity?

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### Take A Look Inside

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Jessica Heffernan, second from right, and her family celebrate at a restaurant outside of London after seeing a “panto” or pantomime of the Christmas story on December 27.

In Kenya, people attend mass on the 24th and 25th of December. People donate to disadvantaged families and then go to the beach. Swimming is a favorite activity. Tasty dinners are eaten in restaurants where new friends are made.

There are two languages in Lebanon – Arabic and French. Therefore, Santa is either Baba Noel or Papa Noel. Jesus was born near Lebanon, so large nativity scenes are often taller than Christmas trees. In fact, people get very competitive over their nativity scenes, which are considered a blessing. Traditional foods include

kibbeh dipped in a delicious cucumber yogurt sauce. Parties stop at midnight when everyone goes to midnight mass. The 12 days of Christmas are celebrated until January 6.

La Posada is celebrated in Mexico to celebrate the virgin Mary asking for a place to stay. The moment is recreated, and then there is a big party with tamales and hot chocolate. The piñata is created with seven spikes, representing the seven cardinal sins. By “hitting” the seven spikes, you make sure the sins are gone and Jesus can be born into a pure world.

In the Yorba tribe in Nigeria, all the students get a month off for Christmas and New Years. All the children light sparklers on Christmas, just like our Fourth of July. Most children get new outfits. Santa Claus is called Father Christmas. Additionally, everyone eats a big meal (and sweets).

Simbang Gabi means “night mass” in the Phillipines. People wear traditional clothes to the mass. Caroling is an important

(Continued on Page 2)



Tamales are a popular dish served during the holidays in Mexico.

# Hanukkah Celebration or Festival of Lights Lasts for Eight Nights

**By Monika White**

Ever wonder why Hanukkah is called the Festival of Lights? The word Hanukkah means *dedication* in Hebrew and it is a Jewish holiday known as “The Festival of Lights” because a candle is lit every evening for eight nights.

The candles are on the menorah which is a special candelabra holding nine candles. The middle candle is used to light the others. Jewish families around the world celebrate the holiday with specific prayers, songs, games, gifts, and food. (You may have tasted potato pancakes or latkes.)

Occurring in late November or early December in keeping with the Jewish calendar, the holiday is held in honor of Judah Maccabees’ victory over the Syrian king who had ordered the desecration of the Second Temple in 165 BC. The Jewish army only had enough oil to light one lamp for one night in the temple, but it stayed lit for eight days, giving the soldiers time to replenish supplies and emerge triumphant from the battle. This miracle became the basis for the celebration of Hanukkah.

Although not the most important of the many Jewish holidays, it has gained popularity because of its close juxtaposition to Christmas.

Traditionally, only small gifts were exchanged such as dreidels,

which are cube-shaped tops decorated with glitter or other festive colors. Each side of the cube features a Hebrew letter which translates as, “A great miracle happened here (in Israel).” Other popular gifts include Hanukkah “gelt” which are coins or chocolates wrapped in gold foil. Today, gifts have become more elaborate in some families, but dreidels and gelt are still part of the festivities and used to play traditional games.

Food plays an important role in the Hanukkah celebrations. Because of the significance of oil in the holiday story, several fried dishes are made such as potato latkes, jelly-filled doughnuts, and blintzes – thin pancakes or crepes, fried and filled with soft cheese.

Braided bread called “Challah,” beef brisket, a stew of sweetened vegetables, and “kugel,” a potato or noodle casserole round out most Hanukkah meals.

There are historical rituals about the manner and timing of the lighting of the candles and rules of prayers recited during the celebration that follow ancient Jewish religious practices. Together with the more modern additions of gifts and often including non-Jewish friends, Hanukkah continues to be a holiday both revered and enjoyed globally by Jewish families.



Some families have more than one menorah, as is shown above. Max was celebrating Hanukkah with his aunt, Sharon Croskery.

## Sign Up For Complimentary Material on Jewish Holidays



Get the recipe for Stained Glass Hanukkah cookies from PJ Library.

Hanukkah, the holiday of lights, begins early this year, running November 28 through December 6.

PJ Library, a non-profit program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, delivers more than 630,000

books to kids around the world each month. If you're looking for a wealth of free holiday resources as well as information and advice for families who want to celebrate Hanukkah and other holidays, contact the PJ Library.

First, any family may sign up EACH of their offspring for a free-of-charge subscription for books each month. What could be a better holiday gift than age-appropriate books delivered to the mailbox each month? PJ Library's children's literature experts curate the book

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## Winter Holiday Celebrations

**(Continued from Page 1)**

part of Christmas, which is celebrated with friends and extended family. There's a lot of cooking involved.

Thanks to the Spanish and French missionaries, Catholicism was brought to Vietnam in the sixteenth century. However, Christmas influences skyrocketed in the 1800s. Nativity scenes and lights decorate the cities. However, midnight mass is very important.

Buche de Noel is a tasty treat, that is served the night of midnight mass. Some people light candles and sing happy birthday to Jesus. Swiss rolls make an easy Buche de Noel cake.



An English Christmas High Tea includes wonderful petit sandwiches. These are served at Ye Olde Kingshead restaurant in Santa Monica.

The feast of the seven fishes is celebrated in Italy. Every Christmas Eve, seafood is eaten instead of meat. Shrimp, scallops, salmon, crab, clams, smelts, and baccala are the seven fish.

However, Christmas is not the only winter holiday. Hanukkah is celebrated here in the United

States and in Israel. In both countries, it is celebrated with latkes and dreidels, highlighted by singing songs and dancing with family and friends. Now, presents are a more divisive topic; some families do them, some don't. Traditionally, in Judaism, Hanukkah is not one of the most important holidays, but it's a great excuse to get the extended family together.

Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday, but a cultural and spiritual one. The seven principles of Kwanzaa are unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. It culminates in a feast called the Karamu. It is based on African harvest festival traditions.

No matter how you celebrate, I wish you a wonderful holiday season. Hopefully, you can spend time with your family. After all, that love connects people from around the world.

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**Editor and Publisher:**

Diane Margolin

**Editorial Assistant:** Miceala Shocklee

**Advertising Sales:** Diane Margolin

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**Contributing Writers:**

Dr. Frank Lavac, Qin Stubis, Michael

Margolin, Lisa Alexander, Julia Abbott,

Jahrid Longworth, Dr. Sheila Forman,

Tesi Treuenfels, Kalina Silverman,

Stacy McClendon, Cheryl Thode,

Luke Netzley, and Kera Snell.

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December/2021

## Winter Holidays in Paris, France

By Isabelle Viguiere

After a 2020 Christmas marked by a global pandemic, do French families plan to change their habits in 2021?

Yes, absolutely. This year, to catch up on this rather special Christmas, as Christmas 2020, although exempt from curfew, was marked by a pandemic of COVID-19, French parents intend to offer more gifts to their children.

Neither fear of variants nor rising toy prices will stop them. They even claim that they will start their Christmas shopping earlier than last year. Namely, before November 15. They also intend to "fine tune" their gifts and go to specialist stores rather than buying in hypermarkets.

They also claim to be really attentive to the origin of the products, being aware of the French economy shaken by the pandemic, and therefore to buy toys of French origin. The small side of the coin is about illuminations.

An essential element of the end-of-year periods, Christmas lights are likely to be less visible this

year. The reason? Delivery times have been lengthened by the health crisis and retailers who are therefore afraid of a shortage in shelves: Around 60 orders pending.

The origin of these ups and downs? The severe crisis in the marine transportation sector, which has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and successive lockdowns that have paralyzed maritime trade. In the midst of the spread of the virus, shipping companies had also reduced their activities, so much so that when demand came back around the world this year, the sector was not sufficiently prepared.

There are not enough ships, there are not enough containers, and there are too many delays in the ports to get in and out. It affects all the supply chains.

So, let us cross our fingers and pray that a Christmas miracle will happen and that France will be illuminated as in the tradition for the Christmas holidays.

Merry Christmas to all and a very happy New Year 2022!

## Fairmont Miramar Collecting Food and Gently Used Clothing to Donate



Drive around the Moreton Bay Fig Tree in front of the Fairmont Miramar Hotel to make a donation of canned food or clothing from December 3-24.

From December 3-24, The Fairmont Miramar Hotel on Wilshire Boulevard and Ocean Avenue will continue its annual tradition of collecting canned or non-perishable food items and clothing (new or gently worn) for their annual Meet Me Under the Fig Tree drive. They partner with Santa MoniCARES to benefit the Westside Food Bank and Chrysalis, a nonprofit that provides support services to underserved members of the local community.

Due to ongoing concerns surrounding large gatherings, they have made the decision not to host the event in person this year. Instead, they will be setting up over-

sized gift boxes under the historic Moreton Bay Fig Tree, where contact-free donations can be dropped off. Hot chocolate will be available for pick up daily from 5 p.m.-7 p.m., and they invite you to stop by for a festive photo op.

Their FIG restaurant menu will be expanded to include seasonal dishes and holiday-inspired specials. The locals favorite FIG @ 5 Happy Hour, with half-price drinks and plates, will be available. For reservations, call 310-319-3111 or visit [figsantamonica.com](http://figsantamonica.com).



## Celebrating Christmas in England

Jessica Heffernan, shown with her family on Page 1, asked her grandchildren their favorite part of Christmas. Karis, aged 13, said, "Christmas Eve, when we get new pajamas and put out mince pies and milk for Santa. I also like going to the crib mass at church and singing Christmas carols." Eleah Grace, five, said she likes going to Santa's grotto. Kaleb, age nine, added, "When it snows, it's really fun as we have snow ball fights and build snowmen."

To find out more about English Christmas traditions, go to <https://www.british-study.com/en/blog/british-christmas-traditions/>.

You will learn about Boxing Day, putting a silver coin into a fruit pudding, the Christmas pantomime, Christmas crackers, hanging stockings, listening to the Queen's speech, and more.



### Byte by Byte

## Celebration Calculation



By Dr. Miceala Shocklee

The holiday season is full of equations. Recipes, visitor counts, days off, miles to go – there's a

lot of math that goes into planning end of year festivities. To celebrate the end of year calculations, this article looks at three science-based (and fun-oriented) takes on tackling the season.

### 1. Cookie Dough Computation

Dough left over when cutting up your Christmas cookies? Science says that you're not alone. While the optimal arrangement for a number of physical objects, from hardware pallets to atoms, has been determined, the more irregularly shaped a set of items, the harder it is to find a mathematically optimized way to fit them together as closely as possible. Christmas cookies, with their curves and angles galore, prove particularly hard. One 2020 study by Mikkel Abrahamsen found that currently, there is no one algorithm that can determine the best way to cut your holiday dough to fit the most shapes in your sheet. To read more about his seasonal quest, peruse an interview with Abrahamsen at: <https://www.studyfinds.org/christmas-cookie-miracle-no-way-to-perfectly-cut-dough/>.

### 2. Santa at Super Speed

While the exact dimensions of Santa's legendary sleigh are still up for debate, the U.S. Air Force did their own research on what exactly a "hypersleigh" built to be fast and sleek enough to possibly approximate a lap-around-the-world-in-one-night speed might look like. To get a look at their design, check out the specs and the calculations behind them at: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/military/aviation/a30317765/air-force-redesign-santa-sleigh/>.

### 3. Wrapped To Perfection

Similar to cookie dough cutting, gift wrapping geometry can result in too much or not enough all too frequently. Luckily, the folks at *Popular Mechanics* have curated yet another holiday article going into the algorithm to spare you some packaging costs. To learn one simple math-hack to help optimize gift wrapping this year, take a look at the explanation at: <https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/math/a30248623/gift-wrapping-trick-geometry>.

Dr. Miceala Shocklee is a full-time aquatics veterinarian and part-time science writer and freelance editor.

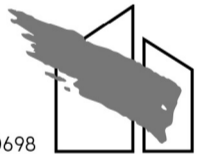


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## Reflections From The East

## The Pursuit of Happiness During the Holidays



**By Qin Sun Stubis**

What is happiness? Is it the smile on our face or the delight in our heart? Is it the accomplishments we have made or the wealth we have accumulated? Or, could it be something else? Often, our smiles are only skin-deep. What we express externally may not represent the real state of our mind, but a facade to please or fool the world. On top of this, our accomplishments and wealth can often

be detached from what really makes us happy. As the old expression goes, "Money can't buy you happiness."

And yet, we can neither proclaim that the rich and successful are miserable, nor that the poor are simple but happy (or, for that matter, the reverse). The longer we live, the more we learn that happiness is often unexpected and can appear and disappear mysteriously. Sometimes it eludes us. Often, it fools us when we realize that what we thought would make us happy disappoints us instead.

Over the years, what makes us happy seems to change. What provokes happiness in us as children may be a world apart from what delights us in our twilight years. In that regard, experiencing happiness is like climbing a mountain. We gain a new perspective every time we make a step forward.

I still remember how, as a child, holiday candies and summer watermelons made me deliriously happy. During my adolescence, I wasn't happy unless I got straight As in all my classes. There was a time in my life when I would only

be happy when everyone else around me was. These days, my family is the source of my ultimate happiness.

The holiday season, with its endearing emphasis on "good cheer," is the perfect time for us to think about happiness and learn a bit more about ourselves. Are we happy? What makes us happy? Maybe it's time to find out.

**You can always reach me at [qstubis@gmail.com](mailto:qstubis@gmail.com) and please visit me at [www.qinsunstubis.com](http://www.qinsunstubis.com).**

## Let's Bake Some Memories



**By Cheryl Thode**

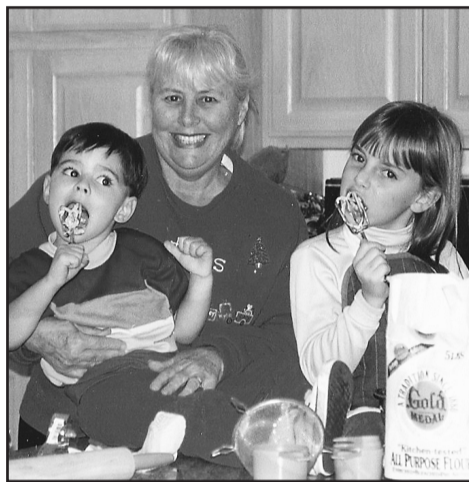
It's that wonderful time of year again, the Holidays. If the pandemic has taught us any thing, it's that time with family is precious.

Last December, the holiday celebrations looked a little different, but where possible, we all tried to connect with our families even if it was just via Zoom. This year, we can get together and celebrate a little more. So, what are we going to do with this precious family time? I suggest a family cookie bake.

Baking is an amazing leveler and uniter. It is also a great way to share time with each other and make lasting memories. In fact, some of my most precious childhood memories involved spending time in the kitchen making cookies with my grandmother, Janie, during the holidays.

In December, Grandma Janie, my brother, Marshall, and I would make a plethora of cookies: typically, chocolate chip, sugar and anise. However, there were about 12 different types we would choose from. How I looked forward to baking day. It was a whole event. We would start by pulling out all the family recipes from the special cabinet we kept them.

Then, Grandma would let us pick which ones we would bake, and



*Cheryl's brother, Marshall, Grandma Janie, and Cheryl baking, a favorite holiday memory.*

together we would make a list of the ingredients needed. Since Grandma was a baker, her kitchen normally had all the ingredients we needed, but on the rare occasion, we would go to the store to get that last component. Then, the baking commenced. There would be Christmas music playing in the background, measuring cups galore and ovens heated and ready for baking.

It was this time, working with my grandma to measure out the ingredients and mix up the batter, that was truly magical. By far, these are some of the greatest memories I have with Grandma Janie. I remember at the end, the kitchen counters were covered with cookies

on cooking racks and the smell, oh the cookie smell! It was amazing!

At the time, I felt such joy and love helping her crack the eggs and measuring out the flour as we made our cookie masterpieces. In the years that have passed, I have grown to cherish these memories and have looked forward to baking those magical family cookies with my own son and family.

So, back to the family cookie bake! In the spirit of the holidays, I challenge you all, mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, neighbors, and children to go out and bake some cookies. I encourage you to get out your spatulas, baking sheets, chocolate chips, eggs, flour, and cookie cutters.

Bake to your heart's content, and share what you make with your loved ones around you. If you want to continue to spread the holiday cheer, pack the cookies you make into little tins or packages and give them out to your extended family, neighbors, and friends.

It's amazing what a cookie can do. As an added bonus, spending time with your family, especially your little ones, and watching ingredients turn into tasty little morsels, is what we all need for this holiday season. Let's put some cookie-scented love into the air and make some life-long memories with those we hold dear. Happy Holidays, and God bless.

*If you or someone you know is a mother in need of a group of mothers to share with and grow her own village, please visit our website at the link below and register to be a Mother of Monica. Go to <https://stmonica.net/ministries/fellowship-groups/moms>.*

## Answer to Neighborhood Celebrity

(Continued from Page 1)



*Rose Linesch has been the concierge at Ocean House for the past 28 years. She says, "I enjoy taking care of my residents."*

## Mini Message Bulletin Board

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## Clergy Corner

## Finding the Light in Each Holiday



**By Rabbi  
Alex Kress**

Every year, the winter darkness surprises me. How can it be dark before 5 p.m.? Even when I know it's coming, I find no way to fully prepare myself for it. Unfortunately, our world has a lot of darkness right now, and the impending winter solstice only adds to it.

As we enter the season of shorter days, we must not let the weight of darkness overwhelm us, and we must remember our individual power to shine light on the world.

There is a story of the 19th century Lithuanian rabbi, Israel Salanter, who recalled, "When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my country. When I found I couldn't change the country, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town, so, as an older man, I tried to change

my family.

Now, as an old man, I realize that the only thing I can change is myself. And, suddenly I realized that if I had started with myself, I might have made an impact on my family my town, my country, and perhaps even the world."

Sometimes, amidst the winter celebrations of Chanukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa, we focus so much on ritual itself that we forget what the light of each holiday intends to teach us: that we too have the power to illuminate the darkness.

So this season, take it upon yourself to add light to our world through acts of loving kindness and generosity. As Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi teaches, "A little bit of light can dispel much of the darkness."

**Rabbi Alex Kress serves Beth Shir Shalom, a warm and down-to-earth synagogue community at 19th and California Ave. His work centers on pursuing justice, inclusion, and good synagogue coffee.**

## Tips to Help Family Caregivers and Those With Dementia Make the Most of the Holiday Season

Here are some suggestions from the Alzheimer's Association on how to make the most of the holiday season. The holidays are often filled with sharing, laughter, and memories. But, they can also bring stress, disappointment, sadness – and due to the COVID-19 pandemic – heightened risk for spreading the virus, especially for older adults who tend to have underlying health conditions.

**A person living with Alzheimer's may feel a special sense of loss during the holidays because of the changes he or she has experienced.** At the same time, caregivers may feel overwhelmed by maintaining traditions while providing care and adhering to safety precautions.

The safest option is to avoid in-person holiday gatherings with people outside of your household – but there are other ways to stay socially connected. Below are ideas for how to safely engage with family and friends during the holidays.

Now that COVID-19 vaccines are widely available to the general public, most older adults have been vaccinated. But vaccinated individuals can still be infected with COVID-19, particularly if they are exposed to people who haven't been vaccinated. Wearing masks, getting tested, physical distancing and other safety measures must continue so that visits can be as safe as possible for everyone involved, especially for our most vulnerable loved ones.

**Familiarize others with the situation.** The holidays are full of emotions, so it can help to let friends and family members know what to expect. If the person is in the early stages of Alzheimer's, relatives and friends might not notice any changes. But the person living with dementia may have trouble following conversations or tend to repeat him- or herself. Family can help with communication by being patient, not interrupting or correcting, and giving the person time to finish his or her thoughts. If the person is in the middle or late

stages of Alzheimer's, there may be significant changes in cognitive abilities since the last conversation. These changes can be hard to accept. Make sure friends and family understand that changes in behavior and memory are caused by the disease and not the person.

**Involve the person living with dementia in safe, manageable holiday preparation activities that he or she enjoys:**

- ◆ Ask him or her to help you prepare food, wrap packages, help decorate or set the table. (Avoid using candies, artificial fruits and vegetables as decorations because a person living with dementia might confuse them with real food. Blinking lights may also confuse the person.)
- ◆ When making holiday plans, consider what will be most comfortable and enjoyable for the person living with dementia, while keeping safety in mind. Maintain the person's normal routine as much as possible, so that holiday preparations don't become disruptive or confusing.
- Encourage guests to bring food and drinks for themselves and members of their household only. If food will be served to all attendees, avoid buffet and family-style meals in which many people handle serving dishes and utensils. Instead, designate one person to plate dinner. Also, consider creative seating options that will help guests practice physical distancing.
- ◆ Adapt gift giving by asking people to send gifts in the mail rather than delivering them in person. Opening gifts over a video call like Zoom or Skype or even over a phone call can still feel very personal.
- ◆ Provide people with suggestions for useful and enjoyable gifts for the person, such as an identification bracelet or membership in a wandering response service. Or, suggest comfortable, easy-to-remove clothing; favorite music; photo albums of family and friends; or favorite treats.

For more details, call 800-272-3900 or go to [alz.org](http://alz.org).

## Passing Through the Pico Neighborhood

## Creating Holiday Traditions With My Sons



**By Stacy  
McClendon**

The holiday season has arrived and is beckoning us to celebrate with it and commune with family and friends.

My celebration of the Christmas holidays began when I was 18 years old, as I was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, and it was against the religion to celebrate holidays. However, once grown I decided to live my life differently. I started celebrating with family and close friends. I always enjoyed giving and receiving gifts, but I never had the materialistic flair that I saw consume most during this time. The whole atmosphere of the holiday season and spending it with family and friends is what has always brought me joy.

Once I had children, things changed as the holidays began to revolve around them. I enjoyed giving them gifts and watching in excitement as they tore open presents that they so desired.

I began to learn about the true meaning of Christmas when I attended a special church home with

my children for most of their formative years.

I was also a leader and member of a single parenting group at this church. During the holidays, many families struggled to give their children gifts. However, our church family never let this remain an issue as they jumped in and provided holiday gifts to families in need (mine included). I had some lean years while raising my children, and was taught first hand how to receive from others, instead of being upset that I couldn't give my kids all they wanted.

Christmas is about sharing and showing those in our life love and generosity in any form that we're able to give them. It is not just about giving tangible gifts. It could be a card, a hug, time spent together, etc.

Now, Christmas is something that I look forward to and take pleasure in deciding with my children how we will enjoy it. One thing I know for sure is that I am thankful to be able to enjoy this special time with whomever is in my presence.

*(Stacy's holiday recipe is on Page 6.)*

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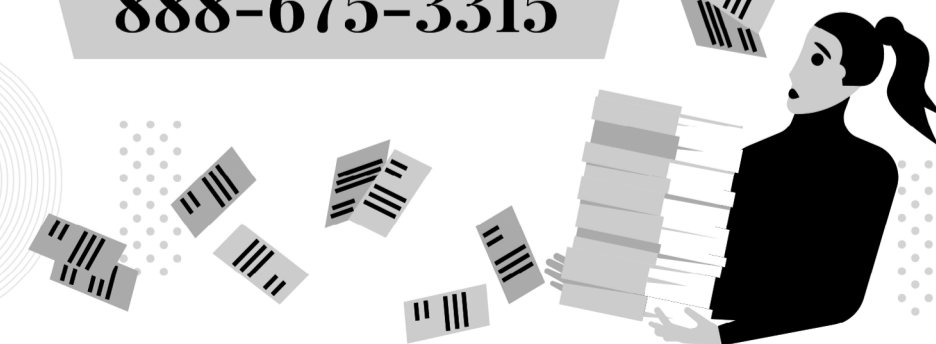
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# SMPL Calendar of Events - December 2021

Check out the many programs from our Santa Monica Library system.

### For Kids & Teens:

• **Mystery Window Art Project at the Main Library - Wednesday, December 1/ 3 p.m. to 5 p.m./Youth Services**

Help an art project come to life! Bring friends and family to create window art at the Library using post-its. What will it be? Come create and see! For ages seven and up.

• **Mindful Pajama Jam at the Main Library - Thursday, December 2/ 5:45 p.m./ TBA**

Learn about mindfulness you can use during the holidays. Wear your pajamas, bring a favorite stuffed animal and enjoy storytelling. Space is limited. To register, email [ann.wilson@santamonica.gov](mailto:ann.wilson@santamonica.gov).

• **Story Time at the Main Library: Camping Adventure Tuesday, December 7/ 10:30 to 11 a.m. / Central Courtyard**

Let's go camping! Participate in stories, songs, and rhymes about camping activities and the wildlife we see when exploring the forest. For ages two and up. Space is limited. To register, email [dana.laderer@santamonica.gov](mailto:dana.laderer@santamonica.gov).

• **Story Time & Craft at the Main Library - Tuesday, December 14/ 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m./ Central Courtyard**

Celebrate the winter season with stories, songs, rhymes, and finger-plays. Make a snow globe craft. For ages two and up. Space is limited. To register, email [ingha.chopra@santamonica.gov](mailto:ingha.chopra@santamonica.gov).

### For Adults:

• **Ocean Park Branch Book Group Discussion - A Long Petal of the Sea by Isabel Allende - Saturday, December 4/ 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

Sponsored by poet Pablo Neruda to flee the violence of the Spanish Civil War, a pregnant widow and an army doctor unite in an arranged marriage, only to be swept up by the early days of World War II. To register, email [karen.reitz@santamonica.gov](mailto:karen.reitz@santamonica.gov).

### • EMERGENCY SHORTAGE

**Red Cross Blood Drive Wednesday, December 8/ 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m./ Multipurpose Room**

Your donation is urgently needed! To make an appointment visit: [redcrossblood.org/make-donation](http://redcrossblood.org/make-donation) and enter sponsor code SantaMonicaLibrary.

• **Mystery Book Group Discussion - We Begin at the End by Chris Whitaker - Tuesday, December 14/ 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. / Register**

using the email address below  
Thirty years ago, Vincent King went to prison for killing his childhood sweetheart's sister. Now, he's returning to his hometown where his sweetheart still lives, and his best friend is the chief of police. To register, email [karen.reitz@santamonica.gov](mailto:karen.reitz@santamonica.gov).

• **Montana Avenue Branch Book Group Discussion - Killers of the Flower Moon by David Grann Wednesday, December 15/ 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. /**

This gripping true account of the early 20th-century murders of dozens of wealthy Native Americans and law-enforcement officials. The book cites the contributions and missteps of a fledgling FBI that eventually uncovered one of the most chilling conspiracies in American history. To register, email [stephanie.archer@santamonica.gov](mailto:stephanie.archer@santamonica.gov).

• **Notable Fiction Book Group Discussion - The Age of Innocence by Edith Wharton Saturday, December 18/ 11 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. /**

Engaged to marry a socialite, Newland Archer is forced to decide between happiness and the social code of the era. To register, email [karen.reitz@santamonica.gov](mailto:karen.reitz@santamonica.gov).

• **Main Library Book Group Discussion - Rosalind Franklin: The Dark Lady of DNA by Brenda Maddox Monday, December 20/ 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m./**

This award-winning biography recovers the life and work of a brilliant scientist whose contributions to the discovery of DNA had gone largely unrecognized. To register, email [jeff.schwartz@santamonica.gov](mailto:jeff.schwartz@santamonica.gov).



## Creating Holiday Traditions (Continued from Page 5)

### Scrumptious Southern Candied Sweet Potatoes

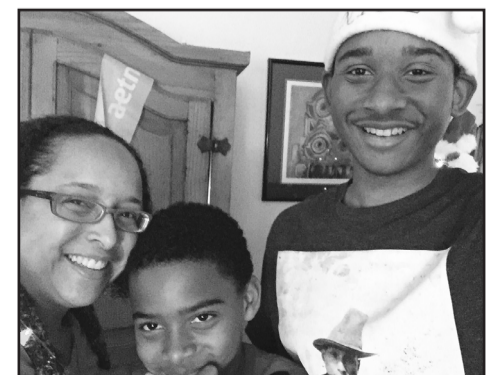
- 6 large sweet potatoes
- 1/2 cup of butter
- 1-3/4 cups Sugar in the Raw
- 1/4 cup of brown sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. nutmeg
- 1 tsp. ginger
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp. of molasses
- Salt to taste

### Directions:

- Peel the sweet potatoes and cut them into slices.
- Melt the butter in a large skillet and add the sliced potatoes.
- Mix sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and salt. Cover the sweet potatoes with sugar mixture and stir. Cover skillet, reduce heat to low and cook for about 1 hour or until potatoes are "candied."

They should be fork tender, but a little hard around the edges. Stir potatoes occasionally during the cooking. Add vanilla just before serving. Enjoy!

**Stacy McClendon is a longtime Pico Neighborhood resident and Santa Monica City staff member.**



Stacy and her sons are getting ready for the holiday season.



# CHRISTMAS

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This Bru Pepparkaka loaf is made in Sweden during the holiday season.

#### Bru Pepparkaka

- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. ground cinammon
- 1/4 + tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. ground cardomon seeds
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 tsp. salt.
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line the pan with parchment paper.
- Melt butter in a 9"x5" loaf pan as oven heats.
- Mix together the first four ingredients in a large bowl. Add the melted butter.
- Mix the flour, baking soda, and spices into another bowl.
- Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet.
- Pour into a loaf pan and bake 375 degrees for about 50 minutes.
- Check the loaf by putting a toothpick in and if it comes out clean, the loaf is done.
- Cool before removing from the pan.
- Serve with whipped cream or ice cream on lingonberries.

#### Swedish Family Recipe

**From Sophie Shafer-Landau**  
A staple of every family gathering, at least with my mom's side of the family, is Mormor's Bru Pepparkaka (pronounced broon pepparkaka)! Mormor means mother's mother, but this has been passed down for several generations now from one grandma to the next.



Sofie shares, "Here's Aina Gustafson (my great-grandma) on the far left, then Julie, Jen, Susan, and Vivian. Aina Margareta Lundquist Gustavson was born and raised in Sweden. My grandma was first generation."



### Plants Are Great Gift Ideas

On December 18 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the West L.A. Chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers (CRFG) is having its annual Holiday Plant Sale. Admission is free. Many plants will be for sale. The event will be at the Multi-Purpose Room, Culver City Veterans Memorial Complex, 4117 Overland Avenue, Culver City. For more details, including the various types of plants on sale, go to <http://wla.crfg.org/plantsale>. Masks will absolutely be required, inside and out. The City of Culver City has also just announced that all attendees must show either proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test within 72 hours of the event upon arrival.




## DECEMBER POP UP

Hosted By: Monika Armendariz  
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## Chef Jahrid Celebrates Christmas The Way They Do in Belize

**By Kera Blades-Snell**

Our Chef Jahrid Longsworth and his mom, Kera, are from the Caribbean country of Belize. It is located on the northeastern coast of Central America. Kera still has business associates there and she visits her family whenever she can.

When we talked about celebrating Christmas in Belize, Kera enthusiastically told me, "Christmas is a very big deal in Belize!

"For the entire month of December, we work on transforming our houses for the season. We buy new curtains for the entire house, change house paint inside, and some outside, buy new bedroom sets, bathroom sets, and dining room sets. Some families buy complete living room and dining room sets, new stoves, even refrigerators, etc. Christmas is a time to upgrade and transform your house!"

It is also a time where families get together and celebrate with a lot of food. Every household makes traditional Christmas cakes, white and black, with and without fruits. Black cakes are made a week or more in advance and doused in Ruby Rich wine a couple times a week for preserving.

For my family, my mother also prepares Christmas morning breakfast. After church, everyone comes over for her amazing Creole Bread, and we devour it with Christmas ham. We usually finish with her white cake and Rum Popo which is a little similar to eggnog.

Christmas dinner, which is served at lunch time, is turkey, ham, rice and beans, stuffings, potato salad, and cranberries. We usually eat and drink all during Christmas day.

It is a party at every house! One of the things that we enjoy is the tradition of house hopping – no invitation needed – just show up and bring friends if you wish.



*Recognize that wonderful smile? That's our Chef Jahrid when a little boy with his mom, Kera, and his older brother getting ready for a Christmas celebration.*

We spend a couple of hours just literally visiting family and close friends and at every spot is cake, rum popo, drinks, and music. This goes on until the day after Christmas known as Boxing Day!

### Rum Popo

**Ingredients:**

- 9 eggs
- 5 cans coconut milk
- 3 cans sweetened condensed coconut milk
- 1 pint brandy (optional) (E and J brandy best option)
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp. cinnamon powder
- 1 Tbsp. ground fresh nutmeg

**Directions:**

- Blend eggs in mixing bowl 10-15 minutes.
- Add coconut milk. Blend for approximately 5 minutes.
- Pour in condensed milk, rum, and vanilla extract. Blend for an other 3 minutes.
- Stir in cinnamon and nutmeg.
- If adding brandy, stir in or proceed to next step.
- Transfer mixture to pitcher and chill before serving
- Serve with ice and enjoy!

### Black Fruit Cake for Christmas From Belize



- 8 eggs
- 2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp. ground nutmeg
- 1-1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups fruit blend
- 5-6 Tbsps. burnt sugar browning
- 1/4 cup wine

You may bake this recipe in a 10" x 3" round baking pan or a 9" bundt pan.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1.5 to 2 hours, depending on your oven.

—Carolyn Jemmott

*A Black Fruit Cake is a favorite holiday dessert in Belize.*

### Black Fruit Cake

Purée these ingredients to make the fruit blend:

- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup currants or mixed fruits
- 1/2 cup prunes
- 1 cup glazed cherries
- 3 oz. rum
- 8 oz. wine

To make the cake, combine the following ingredients:

- 2 cups unsalted butter
- 1 Tbsp. orange zest
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice



*Carolyn likes to add her own touches to the recipes when she cooks.*



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## Join JoyCatcher Volunteers to Make Table-Top Holiday Trees



When not decorating holiday trees to give to seniors and veterans, JoyCatchers volunteers have fun decorating Theme Trees like this one to fit the International theme of this month's newspaper. Flags of various countries, holiday and winter decorations familiar to many shout out Joy to the World on this mini table-top size tree created by JoyCatchers Evelyn Javier.

If you would like to learn more about JoyCatchers tree decorating, please email [info@joycatchers.org](mailto:info@joycatchers.org), or call 310-890-2487. You can see more decorated tree on JoyCatchers Instagram and Facebook pages, and at [www.joycatchers.org](http://www.joycatchers.org).



### Treat Your Friends to An English High Tea at Christmas

You can find all you need to make your own English Tea at Ye Olde Kingshead Shoppe on the corner of 2nd Street and Santa Monica Boulevard in Santa Monica.

No need to jet over to London. You will feel as if you are in England in this shop with imported English foods, clothing, gift items, toys, wonderful freshly baked goods, and more. The helpful staff will also give you suggestions.

Select from a wide assortment of Christmas crackers and other cookies, jams, and teas. There is a "tea to go" at the Kingshead restaurant next door to order. See Page 2 for a sample of sandwiches. Or, if you like, you can make your own tea sandwiches.



Sarah Stebbings holds up a box of Christmas crackers and cookies.

Photo by Bernadette Lucier

## Becky Upchurch Adapted (Continued from Page 1)

Becky explained, "But over the years, I learned to know the place so much better, and now I would never leave."

Becky became and remained an integral part of the local community from the day she first arrived by volunteering at school events and little league baseball games for her sons Andrew and Alex, who are now 34 and 32 years old respectively and have started families of their own.

After her children left for college, Becky accepted key leadership roles at a host of local organizations including the Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club, the Santa Monica History Museum, and the Planned Parenthood Los Angeles Guild (PPLA), which has offered affordable, top-of-the-line reproductive health care to communities across L.A. county since 1965.

As a member on the board of the Planned Parenthood Los Angeles Guild, she helped coordinate important fundraisers and oversaw space planning for each of their events, a role that was very important to her.

"It made me so much more connected to Santa Monica," Becky described, "There are just so many opportunities here." Becky plans to stay involved with the community and has already helped start the Los Angeles Guild for Reproductive Health, a successor of sorts to the PPLA. Though the nonprofit is still in the startup stage, it already has 95 members.

"Our plan is to do fundraisers to be able to give money to people or organizations that provide repro-



Becky at home with baby Lucas, her son Alex, and dog, Luna.

ductive health services for women."

She has also recently helped the Santa Monica History Museum organize its annual gala. This year's event was entirely virtual, but still included dinner and a silent auction for the ticketholders.

"It was our best year yet," Becky said of the event, which celebrated a selection of local heroes making a difference in the community.

Though she has made a life and raised her family in Santa Monica, Becky still stays connected with her family in Wyoming. For the last 13 years in a row, aside from the last two during the global pandemic, Becky has traveled back to her brother's farm for the month of October to help him construct his annual corn maze and pumpkin patch.

Becky looks to the future with excitement and drive as she continues to do inspirational work as a volunteer and leader, motivated by a love for her work and the people around her that have made Santa Monica such a welcoming home for her and her family.

## Driving Rules for Around the World

The USA has the most iconic routes in the world, making a car an essential part of life in this huge country. Here you can make road trips in your rental car last as long as you like: it's over 4,000 miles and a 40-hour drive from the Statue of Liberty in New York to the "Hollywood" letters in Los Angeles.

The staff from StressFreeCar Rental.com sent a release about the ages one must be to drive in various countries.

Their spokesman noted, "There are some interesting differences not only between the minimum ages that young people can begin to drive, often with supervision of a qualified adult, but also the type of vehicle they are permitted to drive."

In Cameroon, Zambia, and Zimbabwe the minimum age for driving cars is 16. In Niger, people must be 23 to drive anything.

In South Africa, the National Road Traffic Act specifies a driver needs to be 17 to legally obtain a license for all motor vehicles under 3,500 kg. This is also the age someone can obtain a learner's licence in order to drive while supervised by a motorist who has had their license for more than a year.

Both Iraq and Israel allow 16 year olds to ride motorcycles, while in Israel you can drive a car at 16 years and nine months if you are accompanied by a driving teacher.

In Asia, you can drive cars at the age of 17 in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Malaysia, and in the latter country you can also ride motorcy-

cles at 16. In Central America, you can drive with supervision at 15 in El Salvador, and at 16 with parent approval in Guatemala and Panama.

Meanwhile in Southern America, parental approval is needed in Argentina and Chile in order to drive cars at 17.

You can drive in Mexico with parental supervision at 15, while in the United States there are laws for different states. Generally you need to be between 14 and 16 for a driving learner's permit and between 16 and 17 for a restricted license.



Saint Candles, a new store at 1327 Montana Avenue, held its opening recently. Above is publicist Kerry Miller. She said that candles are for a cause – for the person in your life who values spirituality. Each Saint Candle comes with a blessing and a prayer, making this a unique gift.

Photo by Bernadette Lucier

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**Paws and Claws**

**Which Pets Need Rabies Vaccinations?**



**By Dr. Frank Lavac MS, DVM**

**Q: Is a rabies vaccination required in L.A. county for my dog?**

of rabid bats found so far this year. Globally, there are around 59,000 human deaths yearly due to rabies. Recently, the CDC has banned importation of dogs from 113 countries with high risk of dog rabies.

The last case of dog rabies in L.A. County was in 2004 in a dog smuggled from Thailand. The last case of human rabies in L.A. County was in a young man in 2004 who had been bitten by a rabid dog 15 months earlier in El Salvador.

The rabies vaccination program is a stellar example of the importance and efficacy of a mandated vaccine program.

**Dr. Frank Lavac can be reached by calling 310-828-4587.**

**A:** Rabies vaccines are required in L.A. County for dogs over four months of age and are recommended for cats. The rabies vaccination program in the U.S. has been aggressive and robust. As a result, the CDC states that the U.S. is free of dog rabies since 2007. There are still rabies in wildlife species including bats, foxes, racoons, and skunks. In L.A. County, there have been 63 cases

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*"Isabella" is a sweet young girl. She was abandoned at our doorstep with her two brothers and sisters. She's about six months old. Please contact [Info@LangeFoundation.org](mailto:Info@LangeFoundation.org).*



*Happy Holidays from Banjo!*

**Sign Up**  
**(Continued from Page 2)**

list to provide the very best children's story books that convey Jewish values, traditions, and themes for the broad spectrum of families raising Jewish children.

Also available are craft ideas, recipes, printables, and more. Go to [PJLibrary.org](http://PJLibrary.org) to sign up.

**Santa Monica Breakfast Club is Back Providing Necessary Dental Care for Santa Monica School Children.**

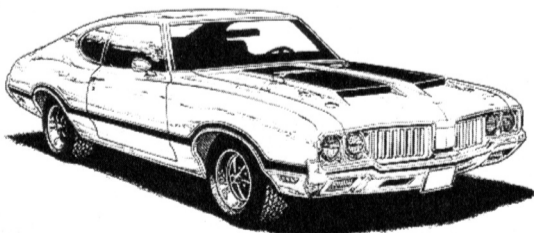
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**From Me to You...**



**By Diane Margolin**

My goal for this issue was to focus on holiday celebrations and recipes from around the world.

As it turned out, we received more recipes than we had space to run. So those recipes will be printed in the January 2022 issue.

Calvary Baptist Church, one of the oldest Black churches in Santa Monica, will once again host the Santa Monica Nativity Scenes from December 11 through January 3, 2022. The 14 life-sized scenes of the Christmas story will be displayed on the grounds of the church located at 1502 20th Street at Broadway in Santa Monica. For more details, go to [santamonicanativityscenes.org](http://santamonicanativityscenes.org).

The National Crime Prevention Council, home of McGruff the Crime Dog®, sends tips to help you enjoy holiday shopping safely.

- Do not buy more than you can carry. Plan ahead by taking a friend with you or asking a store employee to help you carry your packages to the car.
- Save all receipts. Print and save all confirmations from your online purchases. Start a file folder to keep all receipts together and to help you verify credit card or bank

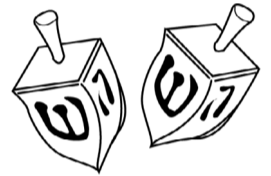
statements as they come in.

- Don't flash the cash. Consider alternate options to pay for your merchandise, such as one time or multiuse disposable credit cards or money orders, including at online stores.
- Wait until asked by a cashier before taking out your credit card or checkbook. An enterprising thief would love to shoulder surf to get your information.
- Packages should not be visible on your car seat. Lock them in the trunk, or if possible, take them directly home.

If you are looking for a delicious gift that will be very much appreciated, remember to call Neli's at 310-477-0031 to order some of their magic muffins to be delivered. They are oversized, freshly-baked and they taste as good as they look. The flavors include pumpkin, carrot, blueberry, cream cheese, chocolate, and more.

Be sure to let us know if you have some new recipes that you would like to share with our readers.

Wishing all of you a wonderful and healthy holiday season.



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# Community Service in Santa Monica

## Rotary Club of Santa Monica Finishing 2021 Rotary Strong

**By Sharon Perlmutter Gavin and John Bartlett**

We are finishing an active year strongly as we move toward our 100th year anniversary in Santa Monica in February of 2022.

The members of the Rotary Club of Santa Monica continued to show that we are People of Action with the plethora of service projects we spearheaded during the months of November and December.

In November, we partnered with the Rotaract students at Santa Monica College for two Rotary Shadow Days, in which four Rotarians had interactive sessions with Rotaractors to discuss and answer questions about their respective careers. We also launched a Rotary boutique at Upward Bound House (UBH), where we provided new and gently-used clothes to the families who live at the UBH Santa Monica location. And, we continued with our Meals on Wheels Rotary Route as well as our Career Guest Speaker Series at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Santa Monica and the Pico Youth & Family Center.

November was also "Movember Month," where we partnered with

the Movember Foundation and launched a mustache competition, (or set a goal to run or walk 60 miles over the month) in order to help raise awareness for men's health.

In December, we were busy packing meals to benefit the homeless youth who are supported by the non-profit Safe Place For Youth.

We also continued our annual traditions of wrapping and distributing gifts to families in need as part of the Connections For Children "Holiday Angels" program and raising money for the Salvation Army as part of our "Red Kettle" day.

At least once a month, we have a worthwhile project scheduled, where we enjoy the process of working together and strive to be of service to others.

If you are interested in joining us as we make a difference in our community, contact us at [admin@rotaryclubofsantamonica.org](mailto:admin@rotaryclubofsantamonica.org) or visit our website at <http://rotaryclubofsantamonica.org>. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Fun Events to Anticipate



**By Susan Barry**

One of the best parts of being a member of Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club (SMBWC) is our monthly Pass the

Dish dinner specially hosted at the beautiful home of our President, Becky Upchurch.

The gathering welcomes all members and their guests to come together for an early evening of great food and wonderful company.

Bridge and canasta continue each Monday beginning at noon, and, we now have Mahjong, which has attracted new players and several new members to our Club. SMBWC is also offering bridge lessons.

For more information, you may email us at [info@SMBWC.org](mailto:info@SMBWC.org) and leave your name for further details, or stop by on Mondays to join the fun!

Our Artists' League continues at 10 a.m. each Tuesday, and, Book Group meets each Thursday at

6:30 p.m. at the Club. Our new Book Group format begins with a discussion of what participants are reading now or books they want to recommend.

The second half of the meeting will focus on our December 16 selection, *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. If you enjoy reading, please join us.

Please keep SMBWC in mind when looking for a place to host your upcoming event. We are available for large and small events, one or multiple day rentals, and are especially seeking other non-profit organizations looking for an event site. Please reach out for further information on becoming a member, rentals or activities at: [info@SMBWC.org](mailto:info@SMBWC.org).

Due to our COVID protocols, everyone must show proof of vaccination at the door and bring a mask to comply with current rules for all indoor meetings.

We are at 1210 4th Street, just south of Wilshire Blvd. Please call 310-395-1308 for more details.

## Congratulations on the Lions Clubs Merger!



**By Linda Levee**

Dear Readers: We are finally through a two year process of merging with The Pacific Palisades Lions

Club. We are now legally known as "The Santa Monica-Pacific Palisades Lions Club." We are planning a celebration after January 1, 2022. We welcome our newly merged members and have completed plans for our annual holiday meeting with the Salvation Army musicians who entertain us.

Our regular meetings will be held at the Santa Monica Elks Lodge on the second Wednesday of the month. We now meet at 6 p.m. to help our working members better attend meetings. Our new President, Lion Kingsley Fife will lead us into the new year.

We are planning a letter writing campaign as our fundraiser this year to replace our annual pancake breakfast.

We are in the process of initiating a new fund raiser and ask those of you who have given in the past to open your hearts and wallets for our deserving charities through Lionism. Everyone has been so patient with all of our changes and COVID-19 adaptations.

Thank you all for your continuing support. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again in the coming year.

For those of you who have high school students, we have our student speakers contest in February. If interested, please contact Lion King at 310-454-2960 for further information. Please have a happy holiday season.

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**Happy December Birthdays to:**  
**Mike Cveyich, Dee Menzies, Aaron Leland, Bill Bubar, RoseMary Regalbuto, JR Dzubak, Bob Sullivan, Judi Barker, Herb Roney, Gita Runkle, Julie Thomas, Frank Lavac, Joyce Margolin, Glenn Ricard, Gretchen Clore, Scott Ferguson, Tammy Andrews, Carole Mullaney, Vicky Curtis, Monty McCormick, Carl McKinzie, Chuck Husting, Bill Kleinheidt Susan Annett, and Mike Gitchell.**

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## John Kearns First Executive Director at Santa Monica History Museum

The Santa Monica History Museum (SMHM) recently appointed John Kearns as its first-ever executive director. John, who began his tenure with SMHM in September, oversees all museum operations including development, education and public programming, finance, external communications and staffing.

"I'm thrilled to be joining the Santa Monica History Museum as the museum board has entrusted me in stewarding this remarkable institution into the future," John said. "I look forward to working closely with our staff and the communities we serve in Santa Monica, and to make sure that we are fulfilling our mission to collect, preserve and share the history and culture of Santa Monica for generations to come."

With more than a decade of museum senior experience, John has held numerous leadership positions including several director of development positions with Heritage Square Museum, Long Beach Museum of Art, Vincent Price Art Museum, and Grand Performances. At these institutions, he was responsible for all fundraising and communication activities while he



John Kearns

helped secure significant funding, ranging from individual gifts to corporate and private foundations.

John holds a BA in Journalism and a MA in History both from California State University, Northridge.

In making the announcement, SMHM Museum President Susan Gabriel Potter said, "I am delighted to welcome John Kearns as the very first executive director for the museum and I look forward to working with him and introducing him to our wonderful community. With his experience in museum fundraising our board is confident that we will be able to secure new funding and foster new relationships for SMHM."

## Get Creative in the Kitchen

Get some ideas for Heathy Sweet Treats for the Holidays from Terri Crystal, on Tuesday, December 7 from 1:30 p.m. - 2:20 p.m. at the Santa Monica Family YMCA Zoom meeting.

Terri is a certified mind-body nutrition coach who will be teaching how to stay healthy and energetic with recipes that won't break the calorie or nutrition bank.

You will learn why it's important to swap out certain ingredients, what ingredients to change, and when it's the best time to enjoy desserts. You will discover how to plan your food day during the holidays and how not to feel deprived or afraid to enjoy your food, whether it's a salad or piece of

pumpkin pie.

To register for the free event, contact Lidia Magarian at 310-393-2721, ext. 129, or email lidiam@ymcasm.org.



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### Westside Voices Presents A Rustic Canyon Christmas

Join this top a cappella group for an afternoon of holiday favorites and fun.

Sunday, December 12 at 3 p.m.

Suggest donation \$15

To RSVP and for location, call Polly at 310-454-6333 or Harris at 310-822-9067.



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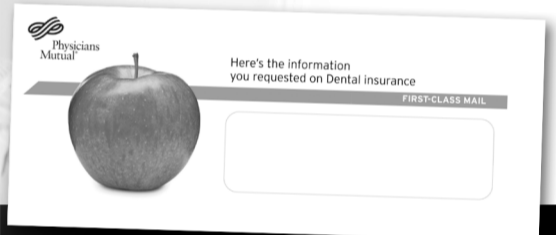
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*Ian is fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, and English. He has an MBA in finance. His clients expect and receive the best service when selling and buying real estate. Ian specializes in residential, multi family, and probate sales.*

**Ian Brooks** is the #1 producer in the Santa Monica Berkshire Hathaway office, and he is ranked in the top half of 1% worldwide. He is a well-known luxury real estate agent committed to delivering a high level of expertise, excellent customer service, and extraordinary results in marketing properties on a global scale. His landmark sales are curated to achieve maximum financial results.

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“We were worried about selling our home during the pandemic, but Ian made it a breeze. His crew was attentive, creative and sold our house in eight days. I am overjoyed and amazed. No other Realtor comes close!” —Janet S.

**Holiday Recipes from Around the Globe**

We asked some local preschool teachers what holiday recipes they enjoyed. For the specific recipes, go online and select the ones that will work for you.

Lida Ahdoot enjoys watching children grow and thrive. She likes nature and the outdoors, and maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle through cooking, baking, and gardening.

For our special issue, she suggested a Persian recipe. She explained that Iranian Barberry Rice (Zereshk Plow) with Saffron Chicken is made for holidays or special occasions.

Susie Urrutia is also a preschool teacher. In her spare time, she likes working out, drawing, reading, and going to Disneyland. She suggested a hearty soup recipe from Mexico for Pozole.

Her recipe uses a large pot, pork meat or chicken, 2 bags of chile guajillo, 3 cloves of garlic, half an onion, and 6 pounds of Hominy (Mexican style.) After simmering on a low heat, you will have a flavorful, comforting soup.

Hiroko Okutsu shares that “There are many New Years Feast items I miss, but the Kuromame (the Japanese black beans) reminds me of my mother and my grandmother. It is a very difficult recipe to master. I remember the excitement and anticipation of the celebration. I do still cherish the memories as a child. The symbolic auspicious meaning of serving the beans at New Year's meals is to give those who partake a long life, well until the skin wrinkles from age.

So, actually, hard and wrinkled beans are symbolically more appropriate; however, when using kuro-mame from Tanba, this is the way to prepare them. Apparently, it's the way they are prepared at high-end traditional Japanese restaurants. Although the beans are expensive, it's a nice way to end the year, and a perfect way to honor my mother-in-law's signature recipe.”

Preschool teacher Aster Moges shared how Christmas is celebrated in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Spiced Chicken or Doro Wat is a delicious sounding stew that incorporates ingredients such as chicken breasts, onions, minced ginger, honey, and hard-boiled eggs.

Christmas is celebrated by going to the Ethiopian Orthodox church on the actual day. It is known as Ganna. (The day before, people fast all day.) Getting up at dawn on Christmas day, people dress in traditionally white clothes with colored stripes across the ends. Mass is celebrated at 4 a.m. Several days later, the priests will carry fringed umbrellas while wearing red and white robes and stately turbans.

There are Ethiopian restaurants in Los Angeles on Fairfax between Pico and Olympic Boulevards if you would like to discover more about their cuisine.



*Mexican Wedding Cookies*

**(Family Features)** Over time, many families tend to return to the same holiday favorites from ham and mashed potatoes to pies and cookie classics. This season, you can add a twist to tradition with these globally inspired desserts.

If you're looking to steal the show at cookie exchanges, Mexican Wedding Cookies provide a crumbly, melt-in-your-mouth texture perfect for dipping in hot chocolate. Find more holiday dessert ideas at walnuts.org/holiday.

**Mexican Wedding Cookies**

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 38 minutes

Servings: 36

2 cups California walnuts, toasted, divided

2 cups all-purpose flour

3/4 tsp. salt

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened

1/3 cup granulated sugar

1-1/2 tsps. vanilla extract

1-1/2 cups powdered sugar, plus additional (optional)

- Heat oven to 325 F. Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone mats.

- In food processor, finely grind 1 cup walnuts, about 10-15 seconds. Transfer to medium bowl.

- In food processor, pulse remaining walnuts about 5 seconds. Add to medium bowl with finely ground walnuts. Stir in flour and salt; set aside.

- In an electric mixer bowl, combine butter and granulated sugar. Beat 2 minutes, or until fluffy. Scrape sides of bowl. Add vanilla; beat 1 minute. Add flour and walnut mixture; beat 30 seconds, or until combined. Scrape down sides of bowl and beaters; continue hand-mixing dough until well combined.

- Working with 1 tablespoon dough at a time, roll into 1 1/4-inch balls and arrange 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake until cookies are lightly golden brown, about 18 minutes, rotating baking sheets halfway through.

- Remove cookies from oven and cool on baking sheets 10 minutes. Transfer to wire rack; cool completely. Roll cookies in powdered sugar.

- Before serving, re-roll cookies in powdered sugar, if desired.



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**JOYS OF THE Season**

# Connect to Nature in December

**By Julie Rensink Hanson**  
**Wild Birds Unlimited**  
**Nature Shop**

A favorite winter tradition for many is to participate in the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Ornithologist Frank M. Chapman and conservationists initiated the CBC as a way of promoting conservation by counting, rather than hunting, birds on Christmas Day in 1900.

The volunteer program has grown to include 20 countries in the Northern Hemisphere. To join a local group, visit: [www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count).

If you have fruiting trees or bushes, Cedar Waxwings may de-

scend on them in big flocks. A beautiful soft brown with dashing black masks and red-pointed wings, Waxwings are a colorful treat when they visit your yard. They sit close together on branches and have been known to pass each other berries. Consider planting Toyon (California Christmas Berry) or Coffeeberry to attract a flock to your yard.

Your fruiting bushes also may attract American Robins, who often flock with Waxwings in the winter. Well-known for their prowess as worm catchers, the robins also go for berries of all kinds, and will add their sweet song to your yard.

Dark-eyed Juncos are showing up in great numbers as we move

into winter. Though these hardy birds can survive mountain winters, they are visiting parks and residential neighborhoods this time of year.

They won't be alone under your feeder, as a number of ground-feeding birds, such as Spotted and California Towhees and White-Crowned Sparrows, are around in large numbers this time of year.

Are you a photographer and love the ocean? The next "king tide," the highest tides of the year, will be December 4-5, 2021 and they are an opportunity to be a citizen-scientist. The California Coastal Commission is asking photographers to take pictures of the unusually high tides this time of year. If you would



A Cedar Waxwing

like to participate, visit their King Tides Project website at: [www.coastal.ca.gov/kingtides](http://www.coastal.ca.gov/kingtides). Photographing on a beach or estuary is also a great time to see some of our local shore birds.

## Christmas Time in Hamm, Germany

**By Lukas Cieslinsky**

Very soon, the Christmas season will begin again in Germany. Classically, the Monday after the last Sunday before the first Advent is considered the beginning of the pre-Christmas season in Germany.

From then on, the traditional Christmas markets can be found in every big city but also in the smallest villages all over Germany. The Christmas markets are then open every day until Christmas Eve. They create a truly magical atmosphere, because the many small wooden stalls are not only lovingly decorated by the owners and stocked with beautiful sales goods, but also spectacularly illuminated.

Of course, there are also several Christmas markets in Hamm. The largest is located on the central market square in downtown Hamm also has the supra-regional speciality of its own ice skating rink at the Christmas market.

A walk through the brightly lit Christmas market offers an atmospheric distraction from the early and long darkness during December in Germany. Here, people come together not only to stroll and eat "Reibekuchen - potato pancakes" and drink "Glühwein - mulled wine." They also sing Christmas carols together around the Christmas tree.

At the latest on Christmas Eve, however, most people then move into their own homes. Some people have decorated their own houses as elaborately as they have decorated the Christmas market. This is where families and relatives traditionally gather on the evening of December 24th to celebrate Christmas. The gifts are traditionally given away in Germany on this evening.

A good meal on Christmas Day is common. Many Germans like it simple with potato salad and sausages. Others spare no expense and effort and prepare a goose with stuffing and many side dishes. With all the food, drinks and snacking on pastries and chocolate, one or the other notices a few pounds more weight after the holidays. It is therefore not surprising that many people in Germany sign up for a gym at the start of the new year.

All in all, society and public life noticeably quiets down a bit around Christmas, and people like



A Christmas crafts and food market in Hamm, Germany.

Photo by Robert Szkudlarek

to take the days off for leisurely days at home or extensive walks in nature. In this way, people all over Germany recharge their batteries before the new year begins for schoolchildren, students and adults.

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