

INSIDE

December 2021

Vermilion County

Special Holiday Issue



**Floral 'n Flair
in Catlin offers
holiday gifts &
so much more**

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INSIDE

Vermilion County

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Vermilion Advantage, through membership value, provides strategic leadership on critical large and small business issues - leading economic and workforce development, anticipating and responding to members' needs, addressing quality of life issues and providing a network of information and business contacts. Vermilion Advantage works regionally to bring opportunities to Danville and Vermilion County.

Inside This Issue:

- Page 5 Letter from Vermilion Advantage CEO
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Inside Vermilion County is a monthly publication created by Vermilion Advantage to showcase our members and share good news about Vermilion County. Each issue is mailed to all Vermilion Advantage members and over 1,000 copies are distributed throughout Vermilion County.

VERMILION COUNTY JOB BOARD

A Service of VermilionAdvantage

**we're
hiring!**
JOIN OUR TEAM!

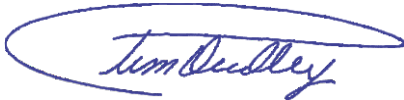
The Vermilion Advantage Job Board gives our members opportunities to find new employees and to post hiring needs on one of the most popular job sites in East Central Illinois at www.vermillionadvantage.com/job-board.

A Holiday Letter To Our Members

Through all the trials and tribulations in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health concerns, or the loss of loved ones, the people of Vermilion County along with us here at Vermilion Advantage have a lot to be thankful for this holiday season. As the CEO, I am close to completing my first year at the helm of Vermilion Advantage, and for this I am very grateful!

I have been very fortunate to have met some wonderful people this past year. The passion for community and "can do" attitude is second to none. There is nothing we cannot do if we all work together to achieve a common goal. The future is very bright in Vermilion County, and we will continue to foster and nurture relationships everywhere we go.

Therefore, we are dedicating our December magazine to our members and what they are thankful for this holiday season. Thank you all for your support and please enjoy your holiday season!



Tim Dudley
CEO, Vermilion Advantage



"I am thankful for the people in our community that want to truly make Danville and Vermilion County a great place to live! I became involved in Vermilion Advantage so we had access to other local businesses, survey results, upcoming activities in our community just to name a few.

We get to choose everyday what we want our community to be - let's choose well for future generations!"

Linda Darby-Dowers,
*CEO of Greenwood Inc. &
Vermilion Advantage Board Chair*





L to R: Rachel Haun, Machelles Dykes, Tim Dudley, Nicole Van Hyfte, Jo Doggett.

I've realized more and more that the things I'm most thankful for aren't "things." What I am most thankful for is my loved ones' health and being able to spend more time with them, making memories. I'm thankful to be here to help my grandchildren learn to spread and teach kindness, to help others, and to practice brotherly love.

Machelle

The 2021 Holiday season is a very special one for me! I am very thankful for being selected as the CEO of Vermilion Advantage this year. I am thankful to have met so many wonderful and passionate people across the county, and very thankful for my great team here in our office. I am also thankful for my wife and family, pets Callie and Candie, and especially thankful to welcome my first grandchild, Joseph, this past week! Here is to a very successful 2022!

Tim

Change is hard and we have and will continue to face many new changes & challenges together! I am thankful to see how strong yet caring we have been for and to each other. Keep On Vermilion County!

Rachel

The way the world has been over the last year and a half makes me so thankful for the people that surround me daily: my incredible husband, Andy, our amazing daughters, our families, friends, my co-workers, and my community. We are truly blessed to have such passionate leaders in Vermilion County, and I am thankful for the many mentors and friends I have gained through Vermilion Advantage.

Nicole

This time of year brings up thoughts of those things that I am most thankful for. Top of the list is that I'm thankful just to be alive and having God in my life. Of course, my entire family, my work family, and friends. I'm thankful to have a good job to put food on the table, a roof over our heads and clothes on our backs. I'm also thankful for my upbringing which is what has helped form me into the person I am today.

Jo

Big Thorn Farm & Brewery Brings Family Spirit to Unique Outdoor Venue

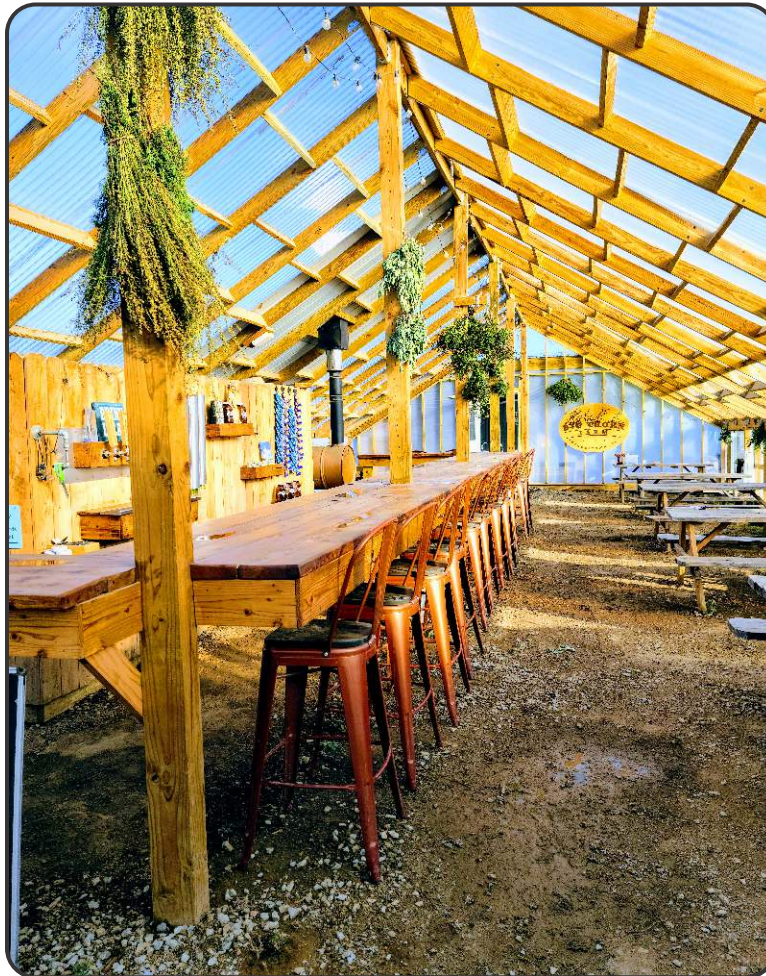
Do you think evenings of joining friends for a casual, outdoor gathering are over? Anna Schweig, co-owner at Big Thorn Farm & Brewery, tells us it's time to think again.

The charming brewery added cozy outdoor igloos in Winter 2019-2020. "These were an answer to Covid when we could not open our Greenhouse Bar," says Schweig. "People loved them so much we've brought them back for 2021 and 2022! Folks can book online at bighornonlinestore.com."

Big Thorn Farm & Brewery is a 15-acre farm and brewery with year-round outdoor taprooms. Aaron Young and Anna Schweig started the farm in 2011 and opened the brewery in 2016. The couple built all the structures on the farm, including their home, brewery, cellar, Tree Bar, Greenhouse Bar, and food trucks. The operation is entirely off-grid and uses solar and wind power.

The team brews with many farm-grown ingredients and ages their beer on various woods harvested from the property's acres of timber. The beer is naturally carbonated, in the time-honored, farmhouse brewery manner, and served on draft and in bottles at the Tree Bar or Greenhouse Bar. "We are passionate about beer and the community it develops," says Schweig. "We enjoy building unique spaces where people can experience the outdoors while drinking world-class beer."

When the brewery opened, Big Thorn distributed throughout Illinois. Since



"Everything we have created with beer and drinking spaces was built under unique parameters. These innovations shine through and make our beer more delicious and our taprooms more inviting. You've never been to a brewery like ours, and when you arrive, you'll feel as though you discovered a secret oasis of creative energy."

opening the taprooms, Big Thorn began limiting distribution to keep up with production.

Two top-rated beers are the Farm Red and Mad Coffee Porter (brewed with Mad Goat Coffee). Along with a wide variety of more traditional beers, the brewery has become widely known for remarkable sour beers. Their souring

process is unique, as they harvest wild lactobacillus, which creates a complex, multi-dimensional array of sour flavors.

Big Thorn Farm & Brewery employs ten people. Food is not available now, but The Truck, a unique food truck, will reopen in the Spring of 2022.

Hours are:
Thursday & Friday 3-9
Saturday 12-9
Sunday 12-8

Upcoming events include:
Saturday, December 18th: Winter Welcome (bottle release)
Friday, December 24th: Christmas Eve (Pie bottle release)
Friday, December 31st: Early Bird New Year's Eve
Saturday, January 1st: New Year's Day Micheladas and Beermosas

Anna says their family loves Vermilion County's parks and the scenery. "We have a five-year-old son, Mack, and our most favorite things about Vermilion County are the numerous, wonderful parks," she says.

To learn more about Big Thorn Farm & Brewery located at 14274 E 600 North Road, Georgetown, IL, visit bighornfarm.com. Or follow them on Facebook or Instagram @bighornfarm.

"We're thankful for our family and that we're able to raise our son to live a life outdoors that is always full of adventure!"

*Anna Schweig,
Co-owner
Big Thorn Farm
& Brewery*



Floral 'n' Flair: A Short Drive to Experience One of the Area's Most Charming Gift & Floral Shops



"Most people do not realize the gift shop is as large as it is inside the floral shop," says Cheri Welsh, Owner/Operator.

Welsh loves the holiday open house season and hopes visitors come for the holidays and return all year long.

Among the unique finds are gingerbread holiday items, Willow Tree items, BruMate cups/mugs, lotions, women's jewelry, purses, candles, and so much more. Welsh is incredibly proud of Duke Cannon Supply Co. items, a unique veteran-created line of men's grooming goods. A portion of the proceeds goes back to

supporting veterans. The shop carries items for everyone and every home decor style. They have grab-and-go gifts which can be beautifully gift wrapped. The shop delivers flowers and any gift items.

"I'm thankful for the small villages in Vermilion County that have great historical stories. The people have a bond that doesn't always exist in the city. There's something to be said for knowing your neighbor."
*Cheri Welsh, Owner/Operator
 Floral 'n' Flair*

Welsh prides herself on quality and value. "I custom design each arrangement and don't 'cookie cut' the designs. I also do all the design myself as I have no regular staff. I rely on family and friends to get the jobs done."

Floral 'n' Flair, located at 108 S. Sandusky Street in Catlin, opened just before Christmas in 2005. "I've been in business for years and still have lots of people who are unaware of what we do, especially that I am so much more than a florist," says Welsh.

Among the many value-added services she offers, event planning and wedding

work are at the top of the list of what customers like most. “Wedding work is at a premium now, and we do a lot of weddings throughout each year,” she says. “I often hear ‘I can’t afford you,’ but I work for my customers inside the budget they give me, not the other way around. We also have rental items available that help with the bridal budget.”

It is well worth the short drive to Catlin to experience Floral 'n' Flair and all Catlin offers. Visitors will love the community's friendly people and appreciate the quality merchandise and sentimental value of choosing unique gift items.

Welsh believes in giving back and helping young people be the best they can be. “I’ve employed many high schoolers over the years, and I love giving them opportunities to

learn and grow,” she says. “We also contribute to a lot of Salt Fork School activities and fundraisers.” Welsh serves on the board of directors at the Catlin Historical Society and was named the Catlin Lions Club Citizen of the Year in 2018.

The longtime business owner believes networking is vital as small businesses struggle to stay afloat against online and larger retail operations. “It is imperative that Danville and other communities' businesses know about and shop with us,” she adds. “No one is protected by the business climate of today and we all need each other to survive.”

To learn more, find them on Facebook @Floral N Flair.

More than a flower shop, Floral 'n' Flair offers unique gifts throughout the year--from jewelry to candles and home décor plus many other unique items.

A few of the items currently available are illustrated below--Willow Tree figurines, Duke Cannon Supply Co. men's grooming goods, Naked Bee Skin Care, flavored coffee and hot chocolate.

Floral 'n' Flair
108 S. Sandusky St.
Catlin, IL
217-427-5888

HOURS:

Thursday-Friday:
9:00am - 5:00pm

Saturday:
9:00am - 2:00pm
CLOSED on Mondays



Grateful! Thankful! Blessed!

“ This Thanksgiving I am thankful for my family, specifically my husband, Kyle, and my beautiful, healthy baby boy, Axel. I am also thankful for time - time spent with family and friends who love and cherish each moment we are blessed to have together.
Hayley Siefert, Classic Homes Realty

“ I am thankful for the small moments, shared with friends and family. Moments that make life worth living and help remind us of our purpose.
Mary Surprenant, CEO & President, United Way of Danville Area

“ I am grateful to God for work with a purpose and a community made up of wonderful, supportive people. I am also grateful that the pandemic seems to be subsiding more every day, and hopeful that we, as a society, may come out stronger, more unified people with a better understanding of what's important in this life as things return to a new normal.
Melissa Wilhelm, Salvation Army

“ I am thankful my family is healthy and we are able to spend the holidays together, the best gift of all! I am also thankful to be able to share the mindfulness techniques I've been teaching abroad for the last few years back to my community here in Vermilion County.
Hunter LaFave, Breath of Fresh Air

“ I am incredibly thankful for the support of this community. We as a community are going through a season of change and growth and to see everyone come together and be supportive has been inspirational.
Alex Gale, Vermilion Regional Airport

“ I am thankful for everything that I have experienced throughout my life in Vermilion County. I pause and think about all of the people that have come in and out of my life, all of the lessons that I have learned along the way and the impact each person has had on my life and personal growth. Life is too short not to take the time to reflect and appreciate what we have and the ways we can help others around us.
Jenna Wirth, State Farm Insurance

“ There is an old saying that says, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” I am thankful that in this COVID year, so many partners have come together, with renewed resolve, working on behalf of our community.
Jeanie Cooke, Executive Director, Danville Area Visitors' Bureau

“ This holiday season I'm especially thankful for my family and their health, and the chance to enjoy the holidays together. The pandemic gave me further appreciation for quality time with loved ones, and how precious those moments truly are.
Amanda Galloway, Country Financial





“ I am so thankful for living in this area. The people of Vermilion County have an amazing spirit and general respect for those of many different cultures and viewpoints. While there are so many things going on throughout our society that frustrate those of any viewpoint, I have been so proud to call Vermilion County home through the chaos of the last two years. Additionally, I'm truly thankful for God's creativity in the design of people with their unique talents, passions, and perspectives. It takes all kinds, and I enjoy that. Let's just add God's creation in general, too. There is nothing that humans can build that beats what has been created for us!
Sam Cole, City of Danville Public Works

“ We are thankful for our dedicated and wonderful staff. Many have been here for over 10 years, and this is quite unusual for a seasonal business.
Nathan & Lisa Campbell, Owners, Danville Gardens

“ I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to cross paths and build a network with so many inspiring and hardworking people in 2021! I am thankful for the contagious energy of those people who make our community so special!
Annie Monyok, Monyok Leadership Coaching

“ I am thankful to God for so many blessings in my life – family, friends, our wonderful employees and customers. I am especially grateful for my husband Don, son Rob and his wife Halley, daughter Katie and her husband Jason, and we are over the moon for the arrival of our first grandson Parker Reed born November 16th. This year will be a very special Thanksgiving!
Deanna Witzel, McDonald's

“ This holiday season I am thankful for my family. During these challenging times, it's comforting to have such an amazing support system from my wife and daughters. I appreciate them more each and every day. It's so nice to spend extra time with them over the holidays.
Andy Van Hyfte, Old National Bank

“ I am thankful for my VHA team, our Commissioners, our residents, and all of the local businesses who help us fulfill our mission at the Housing Authority.
Jaelyn Vinson, Vermilion Housing Authority

“ I am thankful for my healthy family and friends, an awesome work team and a supportive community.
Brooke Ferber, Executive Director, Vermilion County Child Advocacy Center

“ I am thankful to be able to give back to a community that always gave back to me. As the Director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center at Danville Area Community College, it is very satisfying to help new and existing businesses develop by assisting them in any way possible to watch them advance in their personal business capacity. The more we give to our community, the more we all get in return.
Earle Steiner, SBDC



Festival of Trees Continues to Shine Thanks to Balloons Over Vermilion

The area's favorite holiday tradition once again lit up five November nights thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers. The Festival of Trees (FOT) continued this year under the leadership of Balloons over Vermilion (BOV).

In 2020, the responsibility for presenting Festival of Trees transferred from OSF to Balloons Over Vermilion. "BOV was both grateful and humbled to be asked to continue this community event and the 24th edition," says Pat O'Shaughnessy, who coordinates the event with Jim Anderson. "A portion of the proceeds from the event, for the next five years, will be donated to the OSF Foundation. The balance of the proceeds will be combined with proceeds earned from Balloons Over Vermilion and donated to children and family-oriented needs throughout Vermilion County."

With this being BOV's first year of operation, the team followed the successful path of the previous Festival of Trees. With COVID-19 still looming, they chose not to add any new events in 2021 and limited some of the children's events for safety concerns. Attendance figures for

2021 have not been calculated yet, but all special events sold out, and crowds were consistent throughout the five-day event. "As we saw this summer with Balloons Over Vermilion, the community was once again ready to welcome back their favorite events," says O'Shaughnessy.

Nearly 600 volunteers help with FOT throughout the planning and five-day event. O'Shaughnessy says the area's volunteers once again responded to the request for help. This year's event also saw new volunteers step up and make significant contributions to the overall success.

The whole FOT team is grateful for how the community embraces the event, including sponsors, designers, volunteers, patrons, and especially children who witness the magic and beauty.

People may be surprised by the amount of time and level of commitment the steering committee members gave to make the overall festival a success. O'Shaughnessy offers special thanks to the 2021 co-chairs, Mark and Jana Goodwin, who transitioned from OSF to

BOV and presented the event itself. The FOT Steering Team also appreciates the help of OSF Foundation's Angie Lazzell and Debbie Michenfelder in this transitional year.

"Jim Anderson, the best event co-coordinator, summed up everyone's favorite memories over the past 24 years, 'The best seat in the house is at the bottom of the ramp on Saturday morning as the first group of children come onto the floor with wide eyes and lots of smiles,'" says O'Shaughnessy.

Sponsors are the lifeblood of the event, especially the Julius W Hegeler II Foundation, the title sponsor. The team looks forward to working with and attracting even more sponsors, designers, and volunteers for the 2022 Festival of Trees.

To volunteer, sign up on the Festival of Trees website at festivaloftreesdanville.com as the event gets closer. Sponsorship and designer information are also available on the website. The 2022 event is scheduled for November 12-16, 2022.



"As always, I am thankful to live in a community that gives and gives and then gives some more! And to work with the greatest team of volunteers ever!"

*Pat O'Shaughnessy, Event Co-Coordinator
Festival of Trees*

Kennekuk Offers Historic Holiday Light Display

History and the holidays meet again at Kennekuk's Bunker Hill Historic Area (BHHA.) The BHHA Holiday Open House kicks off the light show on Sunday, December 5, 2021, from 2 pm - 8 pm. The BHHA Holiday Lights debut that evening and run every night from 5 pm - 8 pm until January 2, 2022.

The Kennekuk maintenance staff started setting up the wreaths, lights, and displays around the Atwood Home, Bismarck Train Depot, Red Oak School, Vermilion Chapel, Gazebo, Neff Grocery Store, The Old Print Shop, and the Mack and Son Barber Shop in November.

"My favorite part of the Holiday Open House is getting to see so many people come out to enjoy the decorations, listen to the radio shows, and share memories of their holidays or the historic buildings. I also love how people come out just to look at the lights. It just adds to the magic of the season."

The BHHA Holiday Open House was one of the first programs Lara Danzl, Environmental Education Supervisor/Volunteer Coordinator, offered to the public in 1998. The Holiday Open House has continued every year, except for 2020, on the first night of the Holiday Lights.

"During the BHHA Holiday Open House, volunteers welcome people inside the buildings throughout the afternoon and evening," says Danzl. "Many of our

volunteers are members of the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation Board."

During the Open House, visitors can tour several of the historic buildings to enjoy the holiday decor. Susan Biggs Warner decorates the interior of the Atwood Home, and Danzl decorates the interior of the Red Oak School, Vermilion Chapel, Neff Grocery Store, and Print Shop. Each building has its own Christmas tree, previously on display at the Festival of Trees. Ornaments are reused from year-to-year with new decorations added as needed. At the Neff Grocery Store, visitors listen to old-time Christmas radio shows from the 1940s and 1950s like *The Jack Benny Show* and *Fibber McGee and Molly Show*. Former foundation member Doug Quick donated the old-fashioned recordings to the Vermilion County Conservation District (VCCD). Hot chocolate, hot apple cider, and an assortment of cookies are also available inside the Neff Grocery Store. Former VCCD volunteer Raymond Wright created holiday-themed cards and cutouts using the antique machinery in the Print Shop for children to color, decorate, and take home.

The Brooks Family Christmas Display is a new addition this year. This display, featuring lights set to holiday music available on a radio frequency, was created by Chuck and Rita Brooks. The



"As we enter this holiday season, I am thankful for my family's health, especially during the covid pandemic. Many have lost family members or are still dealing with long-term covid side effects. I'm thankful my children are back in school five days a week this year."
*Lara Danzl, Environmental Education Supervisor/Volunteer Coordinator
 Vermilion County Conservation District*

popular display was originally located just south of Kennekuk on Henning Road. Chuck Brooks, a VCCD Board Trustee from 2002-2007, passed away in 2021, and his wife Rita approached Jamie Pasquale, VCCD Executive Director, about donating the light display. To help with the new Chuck's Family Christmas Display logistics, Rita is assisting the VCCD staff with the setup, and Jeremy Stark is coordinating the technical components of the light show. With the addition of the Brooks Family Christmas Display, logistics and electrical coordination needs have increased. The VCCD team of Jamie Pasquale, Gary Tyrl, Jeff Lete, Cole Craft, and Dave Evans spend many hours setting up the outside lights. To make a gift to support the holiday lights, visit vccd.org.

Many of the VCCD's unique programs and events utilize volunteers. The VCCD has only 11 full-time staff for all five park properties (Forest Glen, Kennekuk, Lake Vermilion, Heron County Park, and the Kickapoo Rail Trail), so volunteers are essential. To volunteer at the parks, contact Lara Danzl at 217-442-1691 or ldanzl@vccd.org.



Westville American Legion Post 51 Celebrating 100th Anniversary



December is an important month for the Westville American Legion. Proudly offering service and membership to all veterans, the organization is celebrating its 100th anniversary on December 21st.

The Post is located at 115 S. State Street in Westville.

To celebrate, the Legion has a three-day weekend full of events in December that are open to the public.

All American Legions offer help navigating the Veterans Administration, PTSD support, guidance for financial support, scholarships to veterans' families, memorial services, and care baskets to those currently serving.

Post 51 is open to the public. The Legion offers a bar, ballroom rentals, and a bowling alley with leagues. The Honor Guard, Color Guard, Ladies' Auxiliary,

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
**WE'RE TURNING
100!**
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**JOIN US FOR A
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
DECEMBER 17, 18, & 19**



Friday December 17
The Dixie Flyer Band 7pm

Saturday December 18
Donation Breakfast 8am- 11am
Danville Blues Coalition 8pm

Sunday December 19
Open House 1pm
Post Everlasting Ceremony 4pm
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sons of the American Legion, and American Legion Riders are available for participation to all veterans and their families.

Martin F. Vutrick Westville American Legion Post 51 currently has 160 members.

To learn more, visit Westville American Legion Post 51, 115 S. State Street, Westville, IL 61883, call 217-267-2342, or follow them on Facebook @MartinFVutrick.

"This holiday season, we are thankful to all our men and women in uniform, past, present, and future. Thank you all for your dedication, commitment, and sacrifice!! God bless our troops!"
Troy Strebin, Post 51 Adjutant

Holiday Magic Happening in Hoopeston



Valarie Hinkle, Community Liaison for Gibson Health of Hoopeston and Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce President. "There is no charge, but visitors may give donations via a donation box at the exit. Funds are used for repairs and the purchase of new light displays."

Driving along Route 1 in Hoopeston allows visitors to catch a glimpse of the holiday magic that awaits in McFerren Park. The community has again lit up the park with magnificent lights and spectacular displays open from dusk to 11 PM through January 1st.

"I am thankful first & foremost for family & friends. Also, all who work so hard & are always looking for opportunities to enrich the lives of those in our community with entertainment like the Sweet Corn Festival & the Sesquicentennial that was celebrated this year for Hoopeston's 150th Birthday."

*Valarie Hinkle, President
Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce*

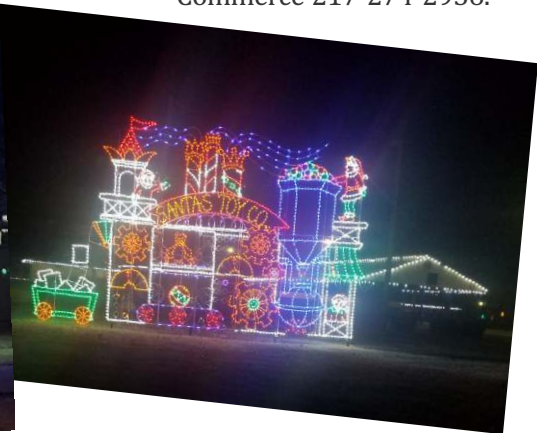
The first lighting of the season occurred when Santa arrived on Saturday, November 20th, as the Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Magical Express Christmas Event. Children enjoyed crafts, cookie decorating, face painting, storytime with Mrs. Claus and food. Many vendors were on hand to kick off Christmas shopping. Jessie Atchie serves as the Magical Express Event Coordinator, along with Chamber member Brandi Totheroh who has been instrumental in the event since its inception.

"The light display became a reality in 2012 when a group of local business owners and city leaders decided to do something exciting at Christmas to bring families to the park for a memorial holiday experience," says

To learn about holiday events and Hoopeston businesses, follow the community on Facebook @Shop & Visit Hoopeston First and Hoopeston Happening. Hinkle hopes area residents will make the short drive to Hoopeston as they are holiday shopping.

Visitors to the community will also enjoy many charming shops, unique restaurants, including the popular 112 Wine and Coffee shop, movies at the Little Lorraine Theater, or live performances at the historic Lorraine Theater.

To learn more about Hoopeston, contact Valarie Hinkle, Hoopeston Chamber of Commerce 217-274-2956.



Sleepy Creek Vineyards Adding Fun and Festivities to the Holiday Season

Mark your calendar to visit Sleepy Creek Vineyards this holiday season. Several special December events offer even more reason to plan the short trip to the beautiful vineyard and venue.



Sleepy Creek will host a Wreath Making Workshop w/Delight Flower Farm - December 7 at 6:30 pm; a Paint Party - December 12 at 6:30 pm; and a Murder Mystery Dinner w/CUTC's Seven Corpse Murder Mysteries - *How the Grouch Killed Christmas* - December 18 at 6 pm.

Sleepy Creek Vineyards has been in business for 14 years. The onsite 10-acre vineyard, planted in 2002, produces over 35,000 bottles of wine annually and is a favorite among locals and tourists alike. "We're known for good wine, a friendly atmosphere,

quirky entertainment, and a rustic venue," says Erik Plotner, who has co-owned the vineyard with Janette Figueroa since 2016. "Growing 10 acres of grapes and managing a multifaceted growing business is hard but rewarding work, especially when the efforts result in an enjoyable glass of wine that others enjoy."

Since purchasing the vineyard, the two have added a wedding and events venue, the *Dragonfly*, which has grown into a premier local events location. The *Dragonfly* hosts about 40 weddings and events each year. Sleepy Creek employs 15 people and relies on numerous volunteers from their *Purple Finger Club* to help get everything done. Visitors may be surprised to learn the 10-acre vineyard is hand-picked, mainly by the club's volunteers.

Janette says Erik's favorite wines are Dreamer, Bull Headed and Calavera con Gato. Hers are Hen Pecked, Bashful Ewe and Little Woody. "My absolute favorite is Hen Pecked," she says. "It's not too sweet and not too dry; it's just right. Our customer favorites are mostly

sweet wines (Scapegoat, Three Amigos, Thin Blue Line, Wine Slushies, and our secret recipe Sangria aka Wapatuli)."

Sleepy Creek is launching a few new wines, a fruit and a blush, which they'll keep secret until available to the public.

Sleepy Creek Vineyards is located at 8254 E. 1425 North Road, Fairmount, IL, just five minutes south when taking the Oakwood Exit from Interstate 74. Current hours are Sunday, Monday and Tuesday: 12 - 6 pm; Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday: 12 - 7 pm; and Friday: 12 - 9 pm.



To learn more about Sleepy Creek Vineyards, visit sleepycreekvineyards.com, find them on Facebook @sleepycreek or follow them on Instagram @sleepycreekwine.



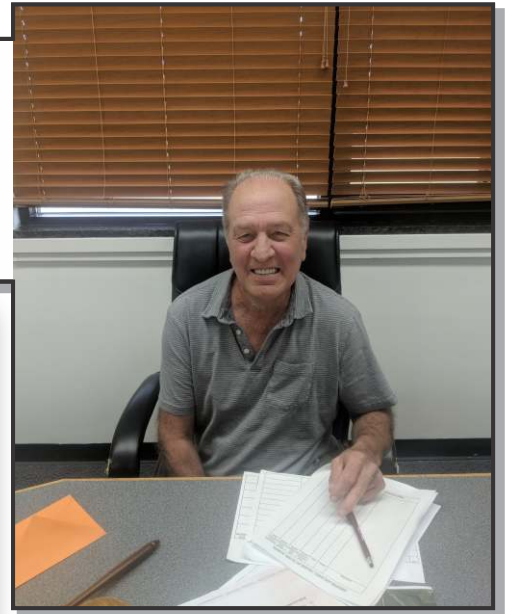
"We are thankful for our health and to still be open for business, and extremely thankful for all of our Sleepy Creek Friends and Family (aka our customers)."

Erik Plotner & Janette Figueroa,
Co-Owners Sleepy Creek Vineyards

Tilton Holiday Lights

"I am thankful for friends and family and everyone who helps make Tilton a better place to live and be."

Tilton Mayor David A. Phillips



Once again, the village of Tilton will light up for the holidays. The community hosts Winter Wonderland at the Tilton Ballpark located just North of I-74 in Tilton (Take the G Street exit and follow the signs once you turn left onto 5th Street). The beautiful display begins December 10 and runs through the end of the year, except for December 13-16th, when it will close briefly to make any needed adjustments. It opens at dark, usually about 5 PM, and remains open until 10 PM.

The village started Winter Wonderland about five years ago with donations from local businesses and funds from the village. "We bought approximately ten displays the first year, and each year we continue to add to the display," says longtime Tilton Mayor David A. Phillips. "We now have over 25 displays for people to see. I think my favorite is the Happy Camper. It is a little camper with woodland animals and looks so nostalgic."

The community loves to play host to visitors who come to see the displays and stay to see all Tilton has to offer.

Every year, thousands of people visit the display from Vermilion County and beyond.

In addition to Winter Wonderland, Tilton will host a Christmas Parade on December 11, 2021. The parade begins on 5th Street by Southwest School and will weave its way to Winter Wonderland. There are also plans for a night when Santa will share candy canes with the kids.

No volunteers are needed for Winter Wonderland. The Tilton Public Works Department takes care of all the details, including setup, turning on the show, and ensuring the lights are working correctly. "The Public Works Department puts hours into this, but it is so worth it," says Phillips. "When we see families going through the park with smiles on their faces, we know we have created some happiness. It is not hard to coordinate the event when you have so many people who want to donate and give to the event to make it better and brighter each year."

For details about Tilton's Winter Wonderland, call City Hall at 217-477-0800.



Holiday Lights Continue to Sparkle in Rossville



Another spot not to miss during the holiday season is Christmas Park in Rossville, just off Illinois Route 1. The Rossville Community Organization has again transformed the park into a lighted winter wonderland.

The Park display officially lit up after the Christmas Parade on December 4th at 6 PM. The lights remain on each night through January 1st.

While some Christmas traditions are on hold this year due to the pandemic, including the senior citizen dinner and Christmas walk home tours, the December 3rd Christmas Bake Sale at the Bank of Rossville still occurred.

While people travel from near and far to enjoy the Christmas lights and

holiday activities, the locals love them too. "My family loves to take a drive through the park before heading home in the evenings," says Emily Duncan, who grew up in Rossville. "I love the people here and in Vermilion County – the people are upbeat, kind, genuine and passionate about their community."



"I am most thankful that my family, immediate and extended, live in Vermilion County and close to Rossville, so I've been able to spend every holiday surrounded by the people that I love the most. I am also thankful that I grew up in a safe community where people 'looked out' for one another with genuine concern."
Emily Duncan, Rossville Resident & Consumer & Commercial Loan Officer at Iroquois Federal



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