VOLUME 9 ISSUE #6

Meaningful Living



November/December 2026

Christmas in America

As the United States' 250th year comes to an end, what could be more fitting that a quick look back at our Country's holiday contributions?

For those early pioneers of the colonial era, Christmas was rarely celebrated and, in some cases, entirely banned. In fact, Congress didn't declare Christmas as a national holiday until 1870. Despite this the first major American contribution to the holiday came in 1823. Soon children around the whole world would be introduced to a happy Santa Claus that slipped down chimneys with gifts and reindeer that flew. Clement C Moore of New York is credited with publishing the famous poem, The Night Before Christmas. Interestingly, it was originally titled A Visit from St. Nicholas and was published anonymously.

Edward H. Johnson came up with the idea of taking his friend Thomas Edison's invention of strung lights and creating the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1882. Christmas lights didn't go into mass production until 1890 when General Electric began manufacturing them.[1] The first White House Christmas Tree decorated with electric lights was turned on by President Calvin Coolidge on Christmas Eve of 1923.

Christmas cards and wrapping paper both have local roots. While the Christmas Card first appeared in England in the 1840s, a new version of the concept came from Boston in 1875.

[1] Mental Floss, Nicolas Rivera, 12-04-2024 From Thomas Edison to LED's: A Brief History of Christmas Lights

The tradition of sending cards, however, really took off when the Hall Brothers (today's Hallmark) began printing cards with envelopes out of their post card shop in Kansas City in 1915.[1] When the brothers ran out of tissue paper in 1917, they got the idea to use sheets of their fancy envelope paper for wrapping which became a holiday standard.

The quintessential kick-off to the holiday season had its first run in 1924. The Macy's Day Thanksgiving Parade is strictly American as our Thanksgiving is specific to our own history. The only years the parade was canceled were from 1942-1944 because of WWII. This year's parade will be its 100th run.

Out of one of the most difficult eras America ever saw, the holidays as we know them were born. During the Great Depression years of the 1930s and through WWII, holidays, especially Christmas, became times of nostalgia and simplicity. These years saw the dust bowl, economic devastation, war, scrap drives and rations. Despite all this, art in its many forms gave us something to smile about.

In the 1940s, radios had become a common household item.

[1] Smithsonian Magazine, John Hank, 12-09-2015, The History of the Christmas Card

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Gardening: Trial and Error

On the Square

Giving Tuesday

Christmas in America continued...

Americans tuned in to hear updates on the war and then recovered with the sounds of Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, the Andrew Sisters and Nat King Cole. Crosby's White Christmas debuted on the radio on Christmas Day in 1941. The movie Holiday Inn which included the song came out the following August. Going to the movie theater was not only possible for most Americans, it was one of the few affordable outings people could partake in.

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer was originally a children's book written by Montgomery Ward employee Rudolf L. May in 1939. May was commissioned to write a book the store could give away for free to draw in more holiday customers as the Great Depression lingered on. Unfortunately for May, the store owned the copyright on the book that quickly went from free to a top-selling item. In 1946, Montgomery Ward gave a widowed and debted May ownership. Gene Autry made the story famous again as a song in 1949, then of course Rankin/Bass created the legendary cartoon special in 1964.

Continuing with the theme of holiday nostalgia, nothing speaks more to the era than the paintings of Norman Rockwell.



Public Domain "Freedom from Want" Norman Rockwell 1941- NARA

Rockwell offered a thought of hope manifest with *Freedom from Want*. Rockwell is also famed for his many Christmas paintings which were often used as advertisements. From the early days of candle lit trees and horse-drawn carolers to our modern traditions of watching the Griswold's holiday disasters and multiple versions of the Grinch's heart growing ten times on Christmas Day, our creativity continues to add more layers of making the season fun. We need a little fun in our lives sometimes. Happy Holidays to you and yours!
~Audrey L Elder

Keeping Connected to Nature

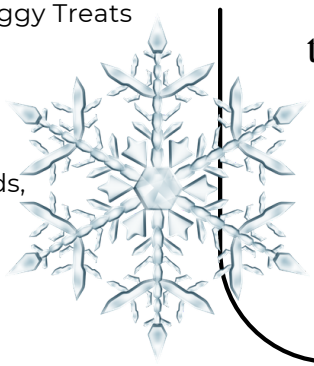
Uptown Market-
Winter Market
First Saturday of the month– 9am-1pm Dec-April

George Owens Nature Park
October– April: 8:30-5 Tuesday-Saturday

Dog Day at the Park
Photo Sessions, Costume Contest 2pm & Doggy Treats
November 7, 1-4pm
Free Event

Winter Solstice Torchlit HIke
Ice Sculpture, Bonfire, Displays, Crafts for Kids,
Christmas Lights and Hot Chocolate Station
December 2, 5-7pm
Free Event

Join A Ranger For a Truman Walk
Every Friday 12pm
Visitor Center - 223 N. Main Street
This is a free ranger-guided 1.5 mile walk around Harry Truman's neighborhood. This family-friendly event will highlight Harry Truman's morning walks. The walk will start and end at the visitor center.



> "What miracle of weird transforming is this wild work of frost and light, this glimpse of glory infinite?"
>
> ~John Greenleaf Whittier

Oh, Deer!



Watch for deer! The whitetail deer rut typically peaks in early November. Those bucks are on the run chasing does without any thought to roads or even highways. Keep vigilant and prepared to stop if one comes your way.

Rifle season is November 14-24. Wear a hunter's orange vest and hat whenever going into the woods. There are also orange vests available for dogs.

THE FOUR R'S OF THE HOLIDAYS

REFUSE:

-Unrecyclable wrapping paper, bows, bags and tissue paper (FYI, most is unrecyclable)
-Turkey bags, disposable baking pans, disposable dishes, paper napkins and plasticware can't be recycled. Buying gifts that might not be wanted.

REDUCE

-Food waste by planning ahead. Have a game plan for leftover foods including making new meals out of leftovers or properly freezing food. Compost what can't be saved (outside of bones and large quantities of meat).
-Plan errand running and shopping ahead, map it out.
-Avoid gifts that are over packaged.



REUSE

Make stockings out of old unwanted clothing or fabric. This year's holiday decorating fads will be gone by next year. Use the decorations you have and find sentimental reasons to love them. Make new ones out of materials you already have

RECYCLE

¨ Clean aluminum, tin, hard plastic and cardboard can all go in curbside or drop-off recycling. Be sure to separate plastic packaging from any cardboard or metal. ¨ Paper wrapping without glitter or coating ¨ Film plastic such as grocery bags, bread bags and shipping bags– ONLY WHERE ACCEPTED (Price Chopper, Walmart, Hy Vee) NEVER IN CURBSIDE OR DROP OFF BINS ¨ Glass ONLY at Ripple Bins and TED's drop-off glass bins, never in curbside unless stated by provider ¨ Old Christmas string lights– ONLY at the Kansas City Zoo, Lee's Summit HHW Facility, and Ace Hardware stores. ¨ Pine Trees– Remove anything on or connected to tree specifically tinsel. Check with your trash service or city for details.

Non-Recyclable:

¨ Wrapping, bows, plastic ribbon & gift bags ¨ Dirty/greasy cardboard, paper, plastic or aluminum ¨ Clamshell plastic sometimes used to package cookies, fruit, etc.

A Few DIY Ideas

• Make gift tags from old Christmas cards • Get creative and wrap gifts with decorated packing paper, fabric, boxes. Make homemade cookies and treats.



Why Everyone Needs a Wood-Burning Stove

By Marge Padgitt

If you live in the Midwest you may have experienced a time without electricity and know the reality o f a cold winter's night without heat. For Midwesterners, a wood-burning stove is a must have because we cannot depend on a gas furnace, boiler, or electric heater to work if the electricity goes out. They all require electric fans to push warmed air throughout the house. I experienced this for three days during a "freak" snowstorm in the early 2000's and I know first-hand what it is like. At that time, I wished we had taken a trip to Florida instead of remaining in our house.

And don't consider using a kerosene heater inside a house unless you plan on opening the doors and windows to exhaust the toxic fumes, which is not very practical. People have died trying this method.

Instead, consider purchasing a freestanding wood stove, or if you have a masonry chimney – a wood stove insert, which takes up less room and still provides adequate heat.

Benefits of wood stoves:

- Wood-burning stoves work without the use of electricity or fans (unlike gas furnaces or pellet stoves).
- Wood stoves and inserts produce TWICE the amount of heat (BTU's) than gas stoves or inserts!
- Fuel is readily available either by using your own trees on site or purchasing through a firewood dealer.
- No electricity is needed for a wood stove or insert to work! In case of emergency when the power is out you'll be able to stay in your home instead of going to stay with friends or family or going to a hotel.
- With a freestanding stove, cooking on the top is possible (I did it during the blizzard!)

The use of a wood-burning stove during fall and winter as a supplemental heating source will help you save money on gas bills and provide a more comfortable, even heat. Radiant heat from a wood stove has more health benefits than a gas furnace or electric baseboard heaters.

Arthritis and Fibromyalgia sufferers enjoy relief from pain when sitting near a wood stove, not to mention that the cat or dog will love it. They seem to know the best place to go to get comfortable.

Decent quality wood stoves aren't inexpensive - but they are worth the investment. A good stove will last many years so purchase one made by a reputable manufacturer such as Regency, Hearthstone, Valor, Lopi, Pacific Energy or Blaze King. Note: beware of box store wood stoves that have no or limited warranty and may burn out after a few seasons.

EPA approved wood-burning stoves and inserts are 75%+ efficient which means that most of the heat is staying in your house rather than going up the flue as with a standard open fireplace.

Note: Wood-burning appliances can ONLY be installed in MASONRY chimneys with a stainless-steel flue liner or with a CLASS A chimney in a wood chimney chase. These appliances should only be installed by a professional who knows the codes and installation methods. Incorrect installation can be a fire hazard. A permit will likely be necessary for installation. Your insurance provider may require an annual inspection by a professional chimney sweep.

Note: Blowers on gas or wood-burning appliances will NOT work if the power goes out unless you have a generator. But the stove will still provide enough heat to stay in your home. Larger homes may require two wood-burning appliances.

Operation and Maintenance:

1. Purchase or obtain wood at least 6 months in advance of the season to make certain the wood is dried properly. Do not wait until fall. Hardwood will burn longer than soft wood, but they will both do the job. Do not burn Hedge since it burns extremely hot and may damage your stove.
2. Purchase an inexpensive moisture meter to check wood moisture content before using and make sure it is 20% or less. Wet wood creates more creosote in the flue and creates a dirty burn.
3. All wood-burning stoves create creosote buildup which must be removed by brushing the flue at least once per year. Sometimes a sweeping is needed mid-season if the stove is used on a regular basis. A professional should do this task.

Continued page 6

Wood Stoves Continued

4. Only use dry pine for kindling to get a stove started – do not use large pieces of pine since it burns extremely fast and hot. Don't burn a dry Christmas tree in a stove or fireplace, either. Fatwood is a good Firestarter, too.
5. Negative house pressure can adversely affect wood-burning (or gas burning) appliances and may cause a reverse draft. For this reason, we suggest the installation of a Draw Collar on the wood-burning appliance if the home is under negative pressure.

For more information visit www.chimkc.com

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Marge Padgitt is the president of Hearthmasters chimney service in Independence, Missouri, and author of Wood-Fired Heating and Cooking, Your House is Killing You, and the Chimney Pro's Resource Book. She is a speaker, talk show guest, and instructor. Visit www.chimkc.com or www.hearthmasters.net for more information.

> Winter is the time for
> comfort, for good
> food and warmth, for the
> touch of a
> friendly hand and for a
> talk beside th fire:
> it is the time for home.
>
> ~Edith Sitwell

Unwanted Winter Houseguests



Not the human kind. We love nature, but some winter visitors aren't quite welcomed. Mice, bats and raccoons are all animals that will happily move in to your home if they can. They also often carry diseases and can cause damage to the home. Snakes and spiders are also often unwanted guests. Most spiders in our area are harmless, but the venomous brown recluse loves interior living. The most common snake to find its way in is a black snake, due to their great climbing abilty and adaptability to living near humans. While they aren't venomous they can cause quite the scare. In the old days, people would actually put black snakes in their basements and crawlspaces intentionally to eat any mice that also had come in. The following are a few tips to keep your home free from all the critters you love... to live outdoors.

- Don't keep birdseed or grass seed in your garage, and if so be sure to place in a sealed rodent proof container. Any kind of seed is a food source for a mouse and a mouse is a food source for a snake.
- Check the entire exterior of your home for any potential entry points. Especially your garage door and where the air conditioner line set enter the home. These animals can get in through spaces much smaller than they are. Mice can enter through a hole the size of a pencil.
- Keep basements and garages clean, especially from bugs. Bugs are a food source for spiders, and even rodents. Year round make sure to keep your exterior foundation wall clean of vegitation and debis if possible. This will help immensly to prevent entry for rodents and insects.



Tales of a Missouri Emigrant: Education, Trial, and Error

By SDW Palma



This year was my second attempt at a Missouri garden and I have to say that I'm pretty pleased with the results. Was everything I planted a success? No, definitely not, but the success rate has increased significantly due to education, trial, and error.

One thing I learned, and this is pretty significant, if you want your sweet potatoes to, well, make sweet potatoes, then you have to create sweet potato slips. I didn't do this last year, and was very sad when I dug up the plants and found no potatoes...sigh. I didn't realize that growing sweet potatoes is a multi-step process. Add a little soil to a container and then bury your sweet potatoes about half-way with the soil. I just shimmied those little potatoes into the soil like they were about to get a good night's sleep. I kept the soil damp but not wet, and placed the container into my indoor greenhouse to keep the soil warm. The greens that pop up from the potatoes, once they are about four or five inches tall, can be popped off and then placed into water to create roots. Once the roots have taken off, and the weather is right, it's time to plant the potato slips, which is an exciting time!

Now, what I didn't know was that once these plants take off, they really take off and it's wild! Would you like to know why? I did, so I looked it up and discovered that sweet potatoes are actually in the same family as morning glory. If you know anything about morning glory, you know it spreads like a weed. Anywho, these plants took off to the point that they have covered about a quarter of my yard. This lead me to my next question, do I have to compost all the greens at the end of the season, or can they be used in the kitchen?

Through a lot of research, and I suggest you also do your own research, I discovered that the greens and stems of the sweet potato are 100% edible and nutrient dense! Who knew?!

I learned that there are multiple potential health benefits to this very versatile plant . I have treated these greens as I would spinach, leading me to try them in multiple dishes. Eggs, pasta dishes, sautees, and on pizza have been a few of delicious experiments that have been attempted in our kitchen. I have been happily surprised by not only the abundance of the greens, but also the flavor, making me feel very fortunate to learn about this amazing plant. But how do you store them for the winter to avoid waste?

There are several different ways I have been preserving the greens. One way is to blanch the greens and then freeze them, removing as much of the remaining water before placing them in the freezer bag. I also do this with the stems to be used as you would asparagus. Dehydrating has been my second go-to, and these dehydrated greens will be added to soups and stews. The last way, and the way that I have yet to try but will be learning about within the next week, is canning the greens the same way you would spinach. In theory it works, but this is part of the trial portion of this article. The results remain to be seen, but I'm very hopeful.

I hope you give the whole sweet potato a chance, from tuber to leafy green, but before you do, make sure you have done your own research to ensure this green is right for you and your family. Ultimately, I hope you enjoy the process of experimenting with a new green and until next time, happy gardening!

ON THE SQUARE

Holiday Open House on the Square
November 6-7

Independence Square Christmas Market Featuring SantaCaliGon Vendors
113 W. Lexington
November 14, 11am-5pm

4th Annual Veterans Day Parade
Hosted by Truman High School JROTC
November 11, 11am

Annual Square Lighting & Santa's Village
November 20
Sleigh Rides, Music and the arrival of Santa Claus
Square Event begins at 5:30, Lights turned on at 6:30. Santa's Village begins at 6:30 at the Uptown Farmer's Market and includes pictures with Mr & Mrs Clause, games, treats, crafts, and limited goodie bags for children.

Shop Small Saturday
November 28
Shop local businesses, the holiday market at the Exchange Event Space (Next to Courthouse Exchange). Santa visits 11:30-2.

10am brunch at Ophelias, $17. Purchase tickets online

Living Windows December 4,
Begins at 5:30 pm with the Mayor's Tree lighting at Hiram Young Park. Visit living holiday displays and performances in business windows on the square, special activities, carolers & hand bell choir. Visit Santa at the Square Association office located at 106 S Liberty

HISTORIC HOLIDAYS

The Vaile Mansion

-Family Christmas Photos
November 20-22

-A Victorian Fairytale Christmas
Tours November 27-December 27
Thursdays-Saturdays 10-4
Sundays 1-4

-Twilight Evening at the Vaile
December 5

Go to VaileMansion.org for more information and pricing

Bingham Waggoner Estate

-Holiday Tours
November 19-December 30
M-W: 10-12, T-S: 10-3, Sundays 1-3

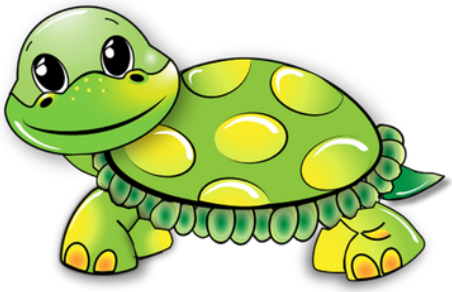
-Twilight Gala Decmeber 4, 5-8pm

-Cookies & Cocoa with Mrs. Claus
December 12, 10am-12pm

Go to BWestate.net for more information and pricing



Ask C.T.! (Conscious Turtle)



DEAR C.T.,
WHERE DO SEEDS COME FROM?
DANIEL

HELLO DANIEL!

THAT IS A GREAT QUESTION. TO EXPLAIN WHERE SEEDS COME FROM WE'LL USE TOMATOES AS AN EXAMPLE. TOMATO PLANTS GROW FLOWERS THAT TURN INTO TOMATOES. DURING THAT PROCESS, SEEDS FORM INSIDE OF THE TOMATO. IF THE TOMATO FALLS TO THE GROUND FOR LONG ENOUGH THOSE SEEDS CAN MAKE THEIR WAY INTO THE SOIL AND START TO GROW INTO NEW TOMATO PLANTS. DID YOU KNOW THAT PEAS ARE ALSO SEEDS? PEAS GROW IN A POD. IF THE PEAS ARE REMOVED FROM THE POD AND ALLOWED TO DRY, THEY CAN BE SAVED UNTIL NEXT SPRING AND GROWN INTO NEW PEA PLANTS! FLOWERS, PUMPKINS, PEPPERS, CUCUMBERS, BEANS AND WATERMELON ALL HAVE SEEDS INSIDE OF THEM THAT CAN BE SAVED FOR YOUR GARDEN. ALMOST ALL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES HAVE SEEDS. LETTUCE, SPINACH AND CARROTS GROW FLOWERS WHICH HAVE SEEDS. EVEN TREES HAVE SEEDS! OAK TREE SEEDS ARE CALLED ACORNS AND PINE TREE SEEDS ARE INSIDE OF PINECONES.

C.T.

Q- Why are seeds bad dancers?
A- They have two left stems.

Q- What did the seed say to motivate it's friend?
A- Let's Grow this!

Q- Did you hear about the sunflower that went to college?
A- It wanted to seed new opportunites.

Q- Did you hear about the seed that won an award?
A- He was outstanding in his field.

Q- What did the mama tomato say to her seedlings?
A- Lettuce grow, lettuce grow, lettuce grow!

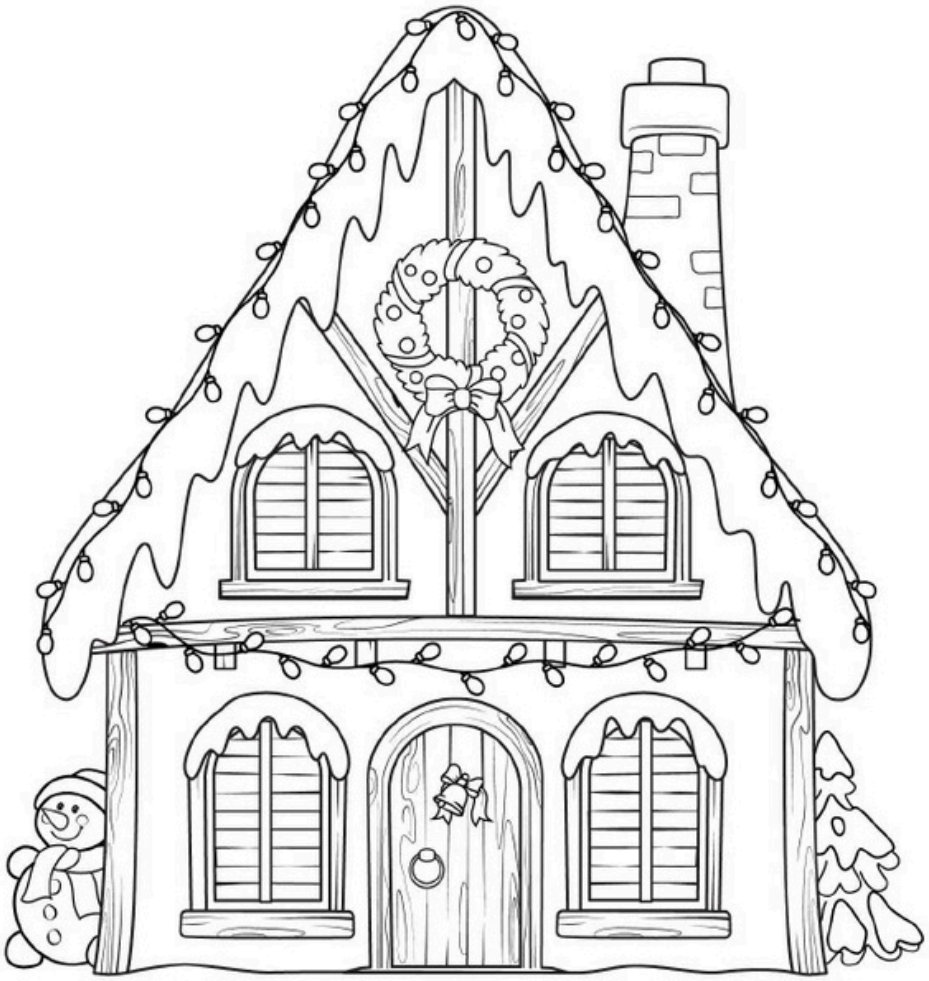


WINTER SCAVENGER HUNT

CAN YOU FIND THESE OUTDOOR ITEMS?

- A pinecone
- Icicles
- Animal prints in the snow
- Berries
- A squirell
- A feather
- A bird
- An acorn
- Twigs





GIVINGTUESDAY

DECEMBER 1, 2026

Giving Tuesday was created in 2012 to offer an opportunity for people to have a specific day each year to dedicate to making a donation, big or small to a favorite organization. If you are considering a donation yourself, the following is a list of locally ran non profits to consider:

Angel's Care Fund (medical care for shelter dogs)
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Bingham Waggoner Historical Society
Blair's Foster Socks
Boys & Girls Club
CAPA– Child Abuse Prevention
Association Community Service League
Centerstone (Mental Health)
Drumm Farm
Center for Children
Englewood Arts
Ennovation Center
Fairmont Community Center
Flourish: A Furniture Bank
Fort Osage Education Foundation
Great Plains SPCA
Harvesters
HealthEd Connect
Hillcrest Transitional Housing
Hope House Independence Meals on Wheels
Independence Optimist Club
Independence Police Foundation
Independence Youth Court
Jackson County Historical Society
Job One
Junior Service League of Independence
KC Shepherd Center (senior support)
Kiwanis Club of Independence
Meaningful Living
Mother's Refuge
Music/Arts Institute
Northwest Development Corporation
Oregon-California Trails Association
Paws and Pals
Peace Pathways
Peace Pavilion
Project C.U.R.E/Franciscan Mission
Warehouse Resource Health
Rotary Club of Eastern Independence
Rotary Club of Independence
Salvation Army
Shep's Place Senior Dog Sanctuary
Sustainable Hope International
The Battle Within
TNC Community
Truman Heartland Community Foundation Truman Heritage Habitat for Humanity
Vaile Mansion Society
WaysideWaifs
West iNd Connection

To learn more, go to GivingTuesday.org

This and That: Are Kids Partied Out?

The days of pizza, cake and a few games before opening presents is a bygone practice. Parents today are invited and expected to attend around a dozen birthday parties a year. This doesn't include holiday parties and expensive playdates to the zoo, theme parks and indoor play venues.

-The estimated amount spent on the average child's birthday party in the 1990s was $50 - $100 ~ US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Today, the average amount spent is around $300 ~ Everyday Health Group. This does not include gifts.

Birthday party expectations include: Entertainment, themed disposable dinnerware, balloons, decorations, backdrops, custom cake or cupcakes, food, snacks, crafts, bounce-houses & goodie bags. Much of which ends up in landfills.

-Some parents are hosting "No Gift" birthday parties. In lieu of gifts, common alternatives include: Asking for food pantry or animal shelter donations. Having a book swap. Doing a craft collection party where each guest brings a craft supply such as a box of crayons or a package of popsicle sticks. Some simply ask for a homemade card. ~thepartyteacher.com

Support Square Businesses
Saturday November 28
On Shop Small Saturday

$68 - $73 out of every $100 spent at local businesses stays in the community

Money spend at local businesses recurculates 6-15 times within the community

Supporting local businesses in historic buildings is a act of supporting historic preservation



Meaningful Living

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Cultivating simple practices for more meaningful lives and a better future through conscious consumerism, recycling options, connected communities and more.

Please Recycle This Newsletter

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PEACE PAVILION
Looking for a fun, interactive activity to share with your kids?
Join us at the Peace Pavilion: a fun, collaborative museum focused on peace-building techniques for children and youth.

CENTERSTONE

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