



# Christmas Countdown 2016

Please remember the reason for the season. †



# Community trees help get holiday season started

- By Devin Crum -

As is tradition this time of year, most of those who celebrate Christmas will get a Christmas tree of some sort to put in their home.

But community Christmas trees give people the chance to experience this tradition on a grander scale since not everyone has a place for a tree of 10 feet tall or larger. And while the trees around eastern Baltimore County may not compare to what is in Rockefeller Center, they can still bring amazement and holiday cheer to those who see them.

For instance, the freshly installed Christmas tree at the Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River is 24 feet tall and is prominently displayed in front of the Essex-Middle River Heritage Museum on Eastern Boulevard in Essex for all to see.

Even bigger, the Overlea community tree at the Overlea-Fullerton Community Center is about 30 feet tall. And since that tree is still rooted in the ground, it will continue to grow larger every year.

Community trees, while they have roots in the past, have become a much more recent tradition in eastern Baltimore County. But they have been gaining in popularity.

The Essex community tree at the Heritage Society, 516 Eastern Blvd., displayed for the benefit of all Essex residents, is a revival of an older tradition which used to see the community tree displayed each year. The museum brought back the tradition a few years ago and it has been a popular aspect of the holiday season ever since.

Baltimore County sent a crew of workers out on Wednesday, Nov. 30 to assist with its installation.

The tree came from the property of Sam Weaver, owner of Weaver's Marine Service on Riverside Drive in Essex. Planted by his father years ago, the tree had been growing at an angle close to the house causing concern that a storm could knock it down onto the house.

As a result, since the tree had to be taken down anyway, Weaver decided to take it down intact and donate it to the Heritage Society. And in fact, next year's tree has already been picked out because of another tree he has with a



A county crew used a crane to help stand up the largest tree the Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River has had in many years. Photo by Devin Crum

similar problem, Weaver said.

Volunteers decorated the Essex tree on Sunday, Dec. 4, and will hold the official tree lighting on Saturday, Dec. 10, during the Heritage Society's annual Christmas Open House. The event will feature free cookies and hot cocoa, plus Santa's arrival via fire truck at approximately 5:30 p.m. according to Heritage Society President Terri Knachel.

Don Crockett, an organizer for the Rockin' on the River music festival,

said the festival donated \$1,000 to the museum's open house. He called the tree a "Paul Bunyan tree" in comparison to last year's and said they bought a four-foot angel for its topper.

"This is what makes Rockin' on the River so much fun to do, because we've given away \$10,000 this year and we'll give it away next year," Crockett said.

Also in Essex, albeit at the other end, is the Rockaway Beach/Turkey Point community tree, on display through - see **COMMUNITY** on page 5B -

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## Area train gardens offer much more than just trains

- Article & photos by Marge Neal -

For many people, nothing elicits childhood memories of Christmas like a train garden.

If you count yourself among those miniature train fans, you're in luck with three prominent holiday gardens, each with a unique style, in eastern Baltimore County.

All created by volunteer efforts, the displays are hosted each year by the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck

Historical Society and Museum, the Glenn L. Martin Maryland Aviation Museum and the Wise Avenue Volunteer Fire Company.

The train garden at the Dundalk historical society started as a small Christmas wonderland display 20 years ago, according to founder Michael Andy. The Dundalk resident owned a personal collection of Christmas decorations and animated figures that was growing so much he needed some place to store it all. He struck up a deal in which he could store the collection in the society's museum if he agreed to display it at the museum each year during the holiday season.

He agreed and the display has grown each year since.

"We're calling this the 17th annual train garden

because before that, it was just a Christmas wonderland without trains," he said. "I started the display here in 1996 and added trains for the first time in 2000."

What started as a small, table-top display now is a multi-tiered creation that uses nearly 300 square-feet of space.

"This isn't a professionally built and designed train garden like some are, with everything to perfect scale," Andy said. "This is more fun, with lots of fantasy and imagination."

On a recent visit to the museum, the floor was covered in glitter, sawdust and other evidence of the construction work being done by Andy and his assistant, Duane Phillips.

The two men were still going through boxes and

- see **TRAIN GARDENS** on page 10B -



Can you find this figurine making a snow angel in the display at the historical society? It could be part of this year's scavenger hunt.

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# Ballestone opens doors for 39th annual Holly Tour

- By Marge Neal -

The Ballestone-Stansbury House strikes a regal pose on a plot of land on Back River Neck Road near Rocky Point Golf Course.

For many people who drive by and wonder about the history of the house, the Christmas season offers the opportunity to tour the building while learning about how some of its inhabitants may have lived when the Ballestone Preservation Society offers its annual Holly Tour.

The recorded history of the land dates to 1659 when Walter Dickenson acquired it and named it for himself, according to the historic location's website. Thomas Stansbury inherited

the land in 1725 and renamed the property "Stansbury's Claim."

The house, still referred to by many as Ballestone Manor, is at least the second home built on the property and is thought to date to 1813. Baltimore County bought the property in 1969 with plans to develop a park. The farmhouse was vandalized and allowed to deteriorate until The Heritage Society of Essex and Middle River campaigned to save the historic structure. The house was adopted by the Essex-Middle River Bicentennial Committee, which vowed to restore the house to its former glory.

Restoration began in 1974 and was completed in 1977, according to the website.

During the Christmas season, Ballestone-Stansbury volunteers dress the house up and show it off to visitors during its annual Holly Tour.

"Our theme this year is 'Dreaming of a White Christmas,'" Preservation Society President Cas Groth said. "And the theme centers around a period wedding of the time."

Both the exterior and interior of the building will be decked out for the holiday. White paper chains adorn many of the rooms.

The child's room features toys and a Christmas tree, while another bedroom has the bride's dress lying on the bed.

"The main parlor is set up for the wedding ceremony," Groth said. "It



The Ballestone-Stansbury House is currently decorated and ready for its 39th annual Holly Tours. Photo by Devin Crum

really is so pretty, and very different."

During the tour, guides take small groups of about eight people through the house from room to room before

- see **HOLLY TOUR** on page 6B -

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# COMMUNITY

- continued from page 2B -

the beginning of 2017 at the Rockaway Beach Volunteer fire hall, 2212 Seneca Road.

This tree is 15 feet tall, and the community is in its second year carrying out the tradition.

Residents of the community donated ornaments to decorate the tree, as well as the abundance of snacks and warm drinks for attendees of the lighting ceremony.

As they did last year and will continue to do for the life of the event, the community dedicates the lighting ceremony to a deserving member of the community who has had a special impact on the neighborhood. That person is then escorted from their home to the event by Santa and a parade of fire equipment and given the honor of flipping the switch to light the tree.

"This event really showcases the very best of our community and highlights why it's such a special place," said Kevin McDonough, vice president of the Rockaway Beach/Turkey Point Improvement Association. "It brings together young and old to ring in the holidays in a spirit of good will and friendship."

A few miles away in Overlea, their community tree tradition stretches just one year longer than Turkey Point's. Their tree at 7209 Belair Road will be lit with more than 600 feet of lights on Saturday, Dec. 10, at 7 p.m.

The tree lighting event is touted as one that brings together community business partners to create a memorable evening. For example, Sippel Electric hangs the lights on the tree and the Parkville Home Depot supplied the lights. Carrabba's Italian Grill in Overlea and the White Marsh Volunteer Fire Company provide delicious sweet treats and hot chocolate, and Raymond Geddes and Company brings gifts for the children.

Additionally, the fire company will be bringing Santa on their fire engine, the St. Michael's Elementary School choir will sing Christmas carols and Larry Daniels will perform "The Night Before Christmas."

"It's very tall," said Overlea Community Associa-

- see **COMMUNITY** on page 9B -



The Overlea community tree remains rooted on the grounds of the Overlea-Fullerton Community Center so that it can continue to grow taller every year. File photo.



Hundreds gathered with excitement as the Rockaway Beach and Turkey Point communities in Essex lit up their inaugural community tree in 2015. File photo.

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# HOLLY TOUR

- continued from page 4B -

ending in the kitchen building for cider and cookies while enjoying the

warmth of a fire, Groth said. This year, visitors will be able to buy homemade breads and other items, including sweets and cider. The gift shop also offers merchandise that "would make great Christmas gifts," according to a statement from the group.

"The house is decorated with gorgeous, gorgeous stuff," Groth said. "The period dishes for the wedding dinner, the decorations, the furniture - it's really worthwhile to come."

The 39th annual Holly Tour will be held from 5 - 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10, and from 2 - 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$1 for children 12 and younger. Ballestone-Stansbury House is at 1935 Back River

Neck Road in Essex. In case of bad weather, call 410-887-0218 to verify the tours are on as scheduled.



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In the past, the house has been decorated to show a traditional holiday dinner and decorations as shown here. The theme for the Holly Tours changes every year. *File photo*

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# Collectible Christmas ornament features Heritage Fair

- Article and photo by Marge Neal -

Heritage Fair, the community festival that was supposed to be a one-time affair as Greater Dundalk's celebration of the nation's bicentennial in 1976,

held its 40th anniversary festival this past summer.

That longevity is being honored this Christmas season with an ornament issued by the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society. The latest edition in a series of collectible glass balls started by the Dundalk Chamber of Commerce in 1986 features artwork of the Heritage Park gazebo as well as the iconic park entrance archway.

The ornaments are available at the museum for \$10 each, according to museum volunteer Theresa Rodriguez. And in what could be good news for collectors missing an edition or two, there are limited quantities of a few previous ornaments available.

"Some of the older ones are \$5," Rodriguez said. "We're trying to clean them out, and they make nice gifts."

The historical society took over the ornament project in the late 1990s, according to society President Jean Walker, with the festive glass balls honoring local lighthouses, schools, landmarks, special events and businesses.

The Strand Theater, Francis Scott Key Bridge, the Battle of North Point and the Star-Spangled Buoy are among the local icons featured on previous ornaments. The entire collection is on display at the museum through the holiday season.

Ornaments honoring Todd's Inheritance, the 4th of July parade, Logan

Field, Dundalk High School, the Dundalk flag and Dundalk Elementary School are still available, according to the group's website.

The museum's gift shop also offers a variety of Dundalk-centric items, including books, T-shirts, coffee mugs, beer steins and Dundalk postcard collections.

One new hot item this year is "Dundalk's Family Favorites," a cookbook filled with recipes submitted by society members.

"They're really popular," volunteer Debi Zimmerman said during a recent visit to the museum. "They're selling like hotcakes."

One woman called from South Carolina and asked to have five copies reserved for her, according to Walker.

"She's coming in to town to meet with some old high school friends and she wants to give them each one



as a gift," she said. "She's hoping they don't come in to get their own copy."

The museum, at 4 Center Place in the Dundalk Village Shopping Center district, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call 410-284-2331

## Ateaze seniors to hold Christmas tree lighting

The Ateaze Senior Center, 7401 Holabird Ave. in Dundalk, invites members of the community to attend its Christmas festivities from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 11.

The event will include the Christmas tree lighting, a visit from Santa Claus (who will arrive at 6 p.m. on a fire

truck), Christmas caroling and children's activities.

Canned goods and other nonperishable food items will be collected and donated to the Family Crisis Center.

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# Santa Claus is coming to town - with the help of our volunteer fire stations

Every year the local fire departments lend Santa a helping hand by giving him a lift around town to do last minute check-ins on little boys and girls. Usually, he's loaded with an abundance of candy canes. This year will be no different, with many local stations doing Santa details leading up to Christmas. So fire up the hot chocolate or hot cider and crank up the Bruce Springsteen, because "SAAAANTA CLAUS IS COMIN' TO TOWN!" Check the list below to find out when and where Santa will be over the next couple weeks.

## Kingsville VFC

Starting on Dec. 17, Santa will be visiting different parts of Kingsville until Dec. 21. The fire truck carrying Santa will leave the Kingsville Firehouse

each night at 6 p.m. Below is a complete list of his route.

Dec. 17: Sheradale Drive to Heathcote Drive to Lynn Drive to Ruxford Drive to Mt. Vista Road to Charlund Drive to Cedar Lane/Towood Road to Juniper Road to Raphael Road to Kingtop Drive to Silver Spruce Terrace to Bellvue Avenue to Patrick Way to Wilton Court to Days Wood Court.

Dec. 18: Franklinville Road to Chapman Road to Redstone Road to Caspian Road to Bluestone Road to Yellowstone Road to Hammond Glen Court to Cedar Lane to Cross Road to Hillside Road to Jerusalem Road to Jerusalem Glen Court to Glenbauer Road to Jerusalem Mill Court to Celabrie Court to Kings Glen Court to Darney Court

to Buckhill Road.

Dec. 19: Longfield Drive to Long Creek Court to Longknoll Way to Mt. Vista Road to El Ray Road to Gontrum Road to Connection Court to Longbottom Court to Batter Brook Court to Harford Road to Vista View Court to Country Hill Court New Cut Road to Lee Ben Road to Kings Gate Drive to Heritage Hills Court to Conner Court to Wesley Woods Court.

Dec. 20: Merrywood Drive to Ridge Cliff Court to Bellman Court to Upland Road to Wilson Avenue to Louise Avenue to Regwood Road to Catalpa Road to Lewis Road to Tyla Lane to Drew Court to Sanfield Road to Palmway Court to Baldwin Gate Road to Stoney Batter Road.

Dec. 21: Miller Road to Gunridge Circle to Foxhill Road to Meeting House Road to Marilyn Road to Perry Hall Road to Perry Land Court to Kraft Hill Road to Schroeder Avenue to Adams Way to Flintlock Court to Colenbourne Road to Gunview Farm Court to Powder Farm Court to Forge Road to Jordan Way to Kyle Creek Court to Gunforge Road Carlyn Road to Forge Park Road to Piney Park Road Falls View Court to Falls Park View Court to Falls Park Road to Richlyn Drive to Forge Valley Court.

## Bowleys Quarters VFC

Unfortunately, the Santa detail for Bowleys Quarters got started on Dec. 2, so many areas have already been visited. But if you missed Santa's earlier visits, you still have time to see him. Dec. 12 is set aside as a rain date.

Dec. 8: Santa will be visiting the Carroll Island Shopping Center and Long



Beach beginning at 6 p.m.

Dec. 9: Santa will be visiting Williams Estates Mobile Home and Stevens Road beginning at 6 p.m.

Dec. 10: Santa will be visiting Carrollwood beginning at 5 p.m.

Dec. 11: Santa will be visiting Seneca beginning at 5 p.m.

## Rockaway VFC

The Rockaway VFW will once again be holding a Santa detail on Dec. 16 and 17. On Dec. 16, Santa will make his way around all of the Turkey Point Road area, and on Dec. 17 he'll be visiting most of the Back River Neck and Holly Neck areas.

## White Marsh VFC

The White Marsh VFC will also be taking Santa around town between Dec. 17 and Dec. 24, but as of press time (Dec. 1) the routes have not been set. That information can be found on their facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wmvfc](http://www.facebook.com/wmvfc).

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# COMMUNITY

- continued from page 5B -

tion President Carol Stover of the tree itself. "They need a cherry picker to get the lights around the top of it."

Stover said the event had grown from the first year to the second and they are hoping to continue that trend this year. She noted that the attracted between 100 and 200 people to the event in both previous years.

"We're hoping to do at least that this year," she said.

Stover said their tree lighting is one of the signature events for the community that they have been trying to grow. It goes together with their summer arts festival and fall farmers market, both of which have been successful.

"We pour our hearts into [the community tree] and we plan really well, and we have a lot of people helping to put all the pieces together," Stover commented.

She believes they have been lucky with the event as well.



The Essex community tree at the Heritage Society was formerly much smaller and artificial. But it was still warmly accepted as the tradition was renewed in the community. *File photo*

"I think people in this area have wanted to have some fun things to participate in and to connect together," Stover explained. "And I think it has given us a stronger sense of community."

Courtesy of Geddes and Company, children in the community receive gifts from Santa at the event, including toys, books, coloring materials and school supplies.

"It's a very local, very home-grown kind of event, and people like it," Stover said, adding that many are just in the mood for it at this time of year.

"We do believe that it brings the community together," giving them something to participate in and look forward to. "It's a happy kind of feeling."

Last year, the Overlea community also conducted a Christmas decoration contest for homes in the community. But details for that this year had not yet been finalized as of this writing.

And of course, there is the official Baltimore County tree currently on display at the seat of county government in Towson.

While this tree is not on the east side, it is displayed for every Baltimore County citizen to enjoy - not just those who live in Towson.

It is an artificial tree, but nevertheless stands 35 feet tall, dwarfing the rest. Put up and decorated by the Towson Chamber of Commerce, it will grace the community's Olympian Park, at the corner of Allegheny Avenue and the traffic circle, into the new year.



Though not in eastern Baltimore County, the Towson tree still stands each year as the official tree for all county citizens. *File photo*



Santa Claus attended both the Towson and Rockaway Beach/Turkey Point tree lightings and will also attend the Essex and Overlea events with the help of the various fire companies with which he partners. *File photo*

## This Holiday Season, Please Help!



Our 2016 card says, "Wishing you a joyous holiday season." Also included is a verse by MJ Kovic: "May love and friendship always comfort your heart."

These cards are part of our continuing efforts to foster love and respect for all animals. What a special way to celebrate your kindness during a compassionate time of year! Thank you and Happy Holidays.



Jack

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**Please remember Defenders of Animal Rights, Inc. in your will.**



# TRAIN GARDENS

- continued from page 3B -

unpacking decorations and figurines to add to the growing and crowded display.

Visitors will once again be invited to participate in a scavenger hunt, which challenges them to find specific features in the display.

The garden will be open from noon to 8 p.m. seven days a week, with the exception of Christmas Day, Dec. 25, when the display will be closed at 5 p.m. and remain closed for the rest of the day. Normal hours will resume Dec. 26 and continue through Jan. 2.



As one would expect, the train garden at the Glenn L. Martin aviation museum includes planes.

The holiday display of miniature planes and trains will be open during regular museum hours, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday through Jan. 14, according to volunteer Mary Ann Pomerleau.

This year's display is "larger and improved from last year," according to Pomerleau.

Admission to the museum, which includes the holiday display, is \$3 for adults and \$1 for children. The museum is in Hangar 5, at Martin State Airport, 701 Wilson Point Road in Middle River.

For more information, call 410-682-6122 or visit [www.mdairmuseum.org](http://www.mdairmuseum.org).

The Wise Avenue Volunteer Fire Company continues its train garden tradition that began in 1981. The volunteers decided to take on the challenge after the decades-old traditional garden hosted by the Dundalk Fire Station closed in 1978, according to the group's website.

Upon hearing that the Wise Avenue group was renewing the tradition, Dundalk firefighters donated their garden items and Wise Avenue was able to double the size of the garden previously hosted by the Dundalk

station. The first Wise Avenue garden was 10 feet wide and 32 feet long, according to the website, and attracted more than 16,000 visitors.

The garden changes every year, and this year the display will include a big circus scene, a section that has a Halloween theme and an Inner Harbor area, complete with tall ships in the harbor and the Navy's Blue Angels flying overhead, according to volunteer Jerry Schisler.

About 10 volunteers start building the display during the second week in October to prepare for the event that now attracts nearly 30,000 visitors each year, Schisler said.

The Wise Avenue VFC's hall is at 214 Wise Ave. in Dundalk. The train garden is open from noon to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and from 6 - 9 p.m. Monday through Friday through Jan. 8. Admission is \$1 for adults and free for children under 7.



Duane Phillips (left) and Michael Andy put in countless hours assembling the display each year at the historical society.



Immense detail and countless moving parts contribute to making the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society's train garden the holiday spectacle it has become.

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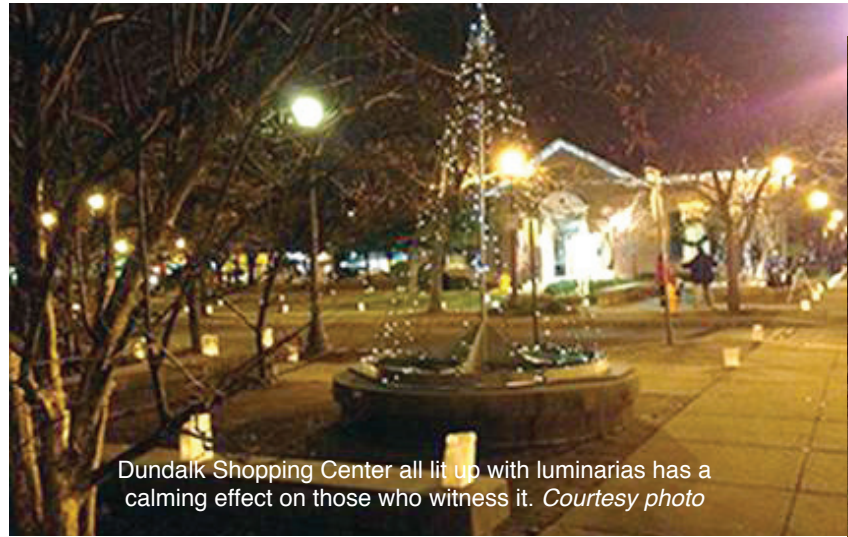
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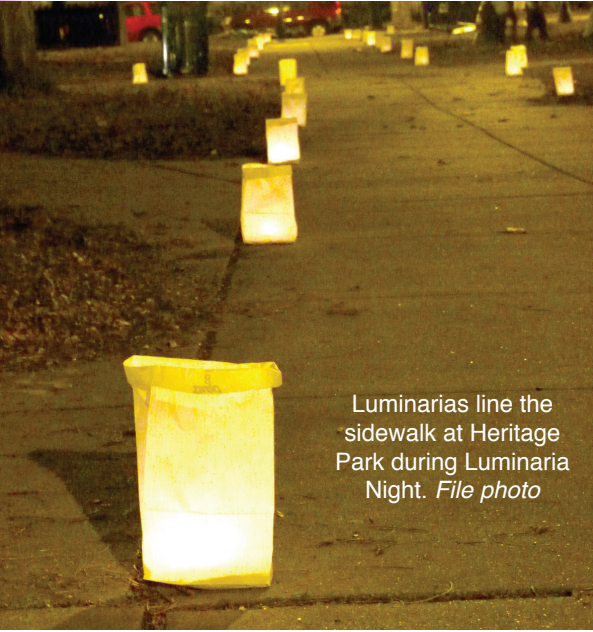




# Luminaria Night gives Dundalk a 'peaceful' look at Christmastime



Dundalk Shopping Center all lit up with luminarias has a calming effect on those who witness it. *Courtesy photo*



Luminarias line the sidewalk at Heritage Park during Luminaria Night. *File photo*



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- By Marge Neal -

Downtown Dundalk will take on the look of an old-fashioned village center on Dec. 16, when area businesses, organizations and churches participate in the annual Luminaria Night.

The event, sponsored by the Dundalk-Patapsco Neck Historical Society, the Dundalk Renaissance Corp. and Dunmanway Apartments, started several years ago when historical society members put the luminarias - votive candles in white lunch bags weighed down with some sand - around the society's museum, Heritage Park and Veterans Park.

The result was so positive that organizers decided to expand the program, according to coordinator Joe Stadler. The project has expanded out of Old Dundalk, with Merritt Park Baptist,

Eastern Assembly of God, Patapsco United Methodist, Our Lady of Hope Catholic and Inverness Presbyterian churches participating, according to Stadler.

"And here in St. Helena, the residents of Maple, Detroit and Cleveland Avenues lined the sidewalks with candles," he said.

"To me, it just looks so peaceful and quiet and pretty," he said. "Even with traffic on Dundalk Avenue, it's just peaceful and calming."

Last year, the event was stifled by windy conditions on both the original and inclement weather dates, Stadler said, even though some hardy folks went ahead and attempted to display their candles.

It costs groups nothing to partici-

pate, Stadler said. The DRC buys all of the candles, Dunmanway Apartments management provides the sand and the historical society buys the white lunch bags. Groups tell Stadler how many candles they need to decorate their perimeters and he delivers all the materials to them.

"All they have to do is line up volunteers to put the candles out and remove them at the end of the night," he said.

Participants are instructed to light their candles by 6 p.m. and remove them by 10 p.m. Any residents not officially participating are encouraged to put out candles on their own if they'd like to add to the effort.

To add more holiday flavor to the event, residents are encouraged to gather between 6 - 6:30 p.m. at the historical society's museum building at 4 Center Place in the Dundalk Village Shopping Center for Christmas caroling. Keyboardist Jay Walton sets up in the front lawn of the museum and Christmas song books will be handed out for carolers to follow. About 60 singers participated last year.

The society's train garden, designed by volunteer Michael Andy, will be open during the event.

"The event is a just a pretty thing to witness; it's a hometown, old-fashioned event," Stadler said. "We're hoping it catches on and becomes a thing our area is known for."

In case of bad weather, the event will be held Dec. 17.

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