

Only 18 Shopping Days
till Christmas!



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December d'Lights - Holiday Fun for Everyone!



Ambur Ross and Josh Jerome represent the more than 100 students from Mountain View High School who joined in producing 101 holiday wreaths, many used to decorate the downtown business storefronts. Students put in 12 hours over a couple days on the project.



Bonnie and Charlie stand ready for the Giddy-up command and another Hayride tour.



Straw goes a-flying as youngsters scramble for coins and prizes in the annual Dash for Cash.



George Holcomb, front left, is on hand for the dedication of the Tribute to the Kootenai County Sheriff's Department. Deputy Erik Hedlund, behind George, along with Sheriff's Capt. Ben Wolfinger and set designer Marc Kroetch look on.

From close by, from points throughout the region, hundreds gathered last weekend to enjoy the sights and sounds of December d'Lights – 2011 edition. One veteran “crowd estimator” pegged the attendance at well over 500 Friday night and “I s'pose, a few less on Saturday.”

Friday evening's activities opened with the 2nd Annual Hayride and Holiday Stroll which featured three horse drawn wagons loaded with bundled-up youngsters, parents, even a grandpa and grandma or two.

“Boy, did this year Hayride go without a hitch,” offered one young rider. “They gave you a boarding pass with the time of your ride. Just enough seats for the passengers – that was really fun.”

Sandy Burnett, manager of the Rathdrum Library and co-organizer of the Hayride said she and her elves handed out “oh, well over 400 boarding passes.”

Meanwhile, the city Parks and Recreation Department kept a couple of warming fires stocked which consistently attracted good numbers of chilled folks.

After the Hayride, participants were invited to take the casual Holiday Stroll through the many shops and stores in the Lakeland Shopping Center – each offering tasty treats and a pleasant, holiday greeting for all.

In fact, one woman – kids in tow – admitted she's recently moved to Rathdrum and, “I've never been to this shopping center. There are

some really nice people with stores in here.

“I'm for sure coming back!”

On Saturday, action started at 3 o'clock with the dedication of a “Tribute to the Kootenai County Sheriff's Department, a stand-out exhibit at the Old Jail. The attractive exhibit – researched and developed by George Holcomb – was made possible through a \$2,000 grant from Panhandle State Bank.

The Lakeland High School choir opened the downtown festivities with rousing renditions of holiday favorites while entries continued coming in for The Star's annual Holiday Recipe Contest.

Following what appeared careful “examination” of each entry, judges Mayor Vic Holmes and computer wizard Joe Hume offered:

Candies – Dorie Rusk with her very tasty Peanut Butter Dreams;

Cakes – Diana Symons Howell and her “oh so good” Oklahoma Pear Cake,

And Cookies – Judy Osmonson with her wonderful Carmel Brickle Bars.

After the judging, the baked goods were cut into bite-sized pieces and distributed throughout the crowd – much to their apparent delight. The “delivery elves” continually returned with empty plates.

Next up, the Dash for Cash seemed to capture the attention of every youngster in the crowd with straw flying everywhere as the young treasure seeking

for coins and a host of prizes offered by McDonald's and Dairy Queen.

This year's Dash seemed to proceed quite well without the “influence” of an older adult.

Again this year, Holmes selected a number of youngsters from the crowd, asking each their holiday wish.

Chelsea and her little girlfriend wanted “the wars to stop and the troops to come home.” Jacob shouted out, “everybody to be happy!”

Rebecca's quick response, “Candy!” brought a roar from the group.

With that and Holmes' wish for “A Merry Christmas to You All,” the Annual Lighted Rig Parade took off down Main Street.

HELLO, NORTH POLE!

It's that time of year again – the ever-popular Santa Call-in, sponsored by the Rathdrum Parks and Recreation Department, is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m., tomorrow evening (Thursday).

Through special arrangements, the department has secured a direct line to the North Pole, “to give our youngsters a perfect opportunity to speak with either Santa himself or one of his helpers,” reported Recreation Supervisor Kevin Aronson.

The telephone number is 687-2399.

“Please don't call before 6 or after 8,” Aronson warned, “as the Big Guy won't be available.”

New Baker Comes to Town!

It's been said... Good things happen in downtown Rathdrum in the wee hours of the morning.

Beginning this week, the aromas of fresh-baked breads and rolls should be filling the air as David Voelker opens his bakery in the white, Quonset hut at 7877 Main Street, between the Parks and Recreation office and Tony's A&J Automotive repair.

“Well it so happens, my wife Carol and I moved into a new home in Rathdrum last October. As we constantly drive along Main Street, we noticed this building with a For Sale sign. I've been looking for a local place to open my bakery.

“And, here I am,” said the personable 58-year-old in between unloading heavy ovens, prep tables, coolers, mixers and a host of items common to the baking business.

“While we'll always have a fresh loaf of piping hot bread for sale to the walk-in traffic,” Voelker says the vast bulk of his business is with health food outlets, Pilgrim's Natural Foods for example.

“I specialize in artisan breads,” he said, explaining, “those made with organic flour – you know, for those whose systems cannot take regular wheat products. In my busy summer months, I'll

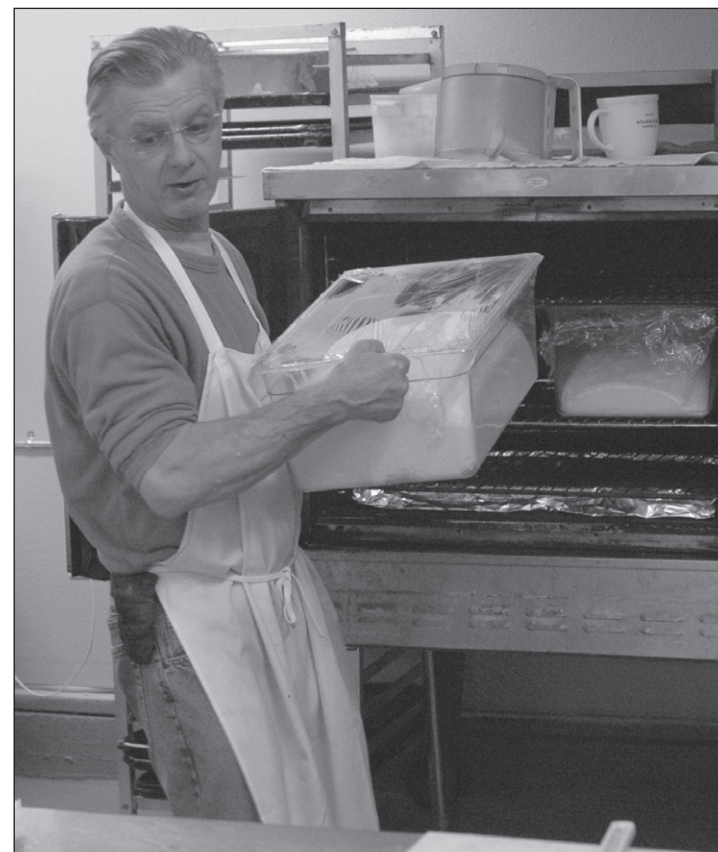
go through up to three tons of svelte flour.”

“I'll make six kinds of sourdough bread, rye bread, garlic bread and rolls. I shy away from the sweet products like pastries...”

“Basically, we sell at Farmers Markets, like the big ones in Coeur d'Alene and that new one in Spokane. We have runners who take our baked goods right from the ovens to the markets – and they sell out just that quick!”

Voelker described his business as a “one man show,” meaning, “I pretty much do it all. Carol helps when and where she can, but I do all the baking. I can't say I maintain regular business hours...most of my time is at night.

“Plus, gotta have some time for fishing! After 25-30 years in the food service business, guy has to have time for the important things...like fishin!”



New baker in town David Voelker prepares sourdough starter for a delicious batch of breads.