

THIS WEEKEND!
December d'Lights
FRI., DEC. 2 & SAT., DEC. 3

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It's that time again! The season's first measureable snowfall is removed from downtown streets.

December d'Lights Planned This Weekend

December d'Lights – traditionally the kickoff into the holiday season – is scheduled to begin Friday evening, Dec. 2 with the “Holiday Stroll and Hayride” at the Lakeland Shopping Center.

The hayrides, sponsored by the Rathdrum Library, begin at 5 p.m. with the last boarding planned for 7:45 p.m. Due to last year's overwhelming popularity of the unique holiday feature, three horse-drawn wagons will replace the two of last year – each winding through the decorated streets of the Deerfield Subdivision.

Free boarding passes for the hayrides may be obtained beginning at 4 p.m. Friday at the library.

Along with the hayrides will be the Holiday Stroll which involves presenting a card to each participating merchant in the shopping center and having it validated before submitting it at Stein's Family Foods for a “huge” gift basket drawing at 8:15 p.m.

Meanwhile, each participating business will be hosting various open house events to include snacks and holiday hospitality.

On Saturday, the action

moves downtown from 3 to 5:30 p.m. with opening festive holiday selections performed by the Lakeland High School choir.

Throughout the afternoon, a growing number of Main Street businesses are planning “special” holiday activities, such as Spin the Wheel for prizes at Adept Business Services, hands-on crafts at City Hall, vendors, a bake sale and a canned food drive at Dance Theatre Northwest and a cupcake walk with hot beverages at the Harvest Church.

The North Idaho Christian Cowboy Balladeers are scheduled to perform in The Star newspaper office.

Also, the Rathdrum Community Seventh Day Adventist Church has planned a variety of holiday medleys while guided tours of the STAR Discovery Bus will be available to all.

Meanwhile, by special invitation, a visitor from the North Pole has scheduled an appearance at the corner of Main and McCartney Streets where, it's been reported, he will be handing out bags of treats provided by the Rathdrum Lions Club as well as lending an ear to any “wish lists.”

From 3:45 to 4 p.m., the Star's annual Holiday Recipe Contest will be in full swing. Entries must be submitted by 3 p.m., to allow the “hungry” judges ample opportunity to sample each submission. Once the final decisions are made, Santa's elves will circulate the crowd, offering samples of the many entries.

From noon to 4 p.m. is scheduled the 2nd Annual Project Linus Bazaar and Quilt Show at the Lions Club on Highway 53 at Meyer Road. A wide selection of handmade items as well as holiday treats will be offered for sale along with door prize giveaways every 30 minutes plus a drawing for a queen-size quilt taking place at 3 o'clock.

At 4 p.m., youngsters from 2 through 12 will converge on the empty lot adjacent the Adept Business Systems for the Dash for Cash coin scramble. This year, four age groups each will be given time to rustle through piles of hay in search of coins.

Age groups are 2-4, 5-7, 8-10 and 11-12. Again this year, the GEM Community Advisory Committee is sponsoring the Dash for Cash.

At 5 p.m. Mayor Vic Holmes is scheduled to throw the “magic switch” to light the trees along Main Street as the decorated vehicles line up for the annual “lighted rig parade” through the southern half of the city. There is no entry fee, no vehicle registration and no parade order.

“Anyone can enter. All it requires is you decorate your rig for the occasion,” reported a veteran of many parades. “Rigs,” he said, “can be pickups, cars, fire trucks, school buses – heck, we've even had a motorcycle or two in years past!”

Council Considers Resolutions

A pair of resolutions, one involving the use of cell phones while driving in school zones and the other prohibiting the sale and use of electronic cigarettes by minors were approved recently by the Rathdrum City Council.

Both were sent to the state Legislature with recommendations they be enacted into law.

On the issue of banning cell phones in school zones, Council member Paula Laws told the council she was “vehemently” against the use of cell phones by any driver, anywhere in the city.

Hands free cell phone usage, she conceded, would “be tolerable.”

Ultimately, the Council opted to ask the state to consider legislation outlawing cell phone usage as local enforcement could become a “nightmare.”

As a motorist coming from, say, Oregon, would be unaware of a Rathdrum law dealing with his or her cell phone. Whereas, if a no-cell-phone law was statewide, an out of state driver would have little recourse with an “I didn't know” excuse.

The issue of banning e-cigarettes for minors involved much the same argument, in that enforcement could become an unwanted problem. As a statewide issue, minors buying, using or selling e-

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Traffic Engineers Seek to Better Highway 53

A “wish list” of improvements along the 14.2 mile stretch of Highway 53 from Stateline to Highway 95 was put in motion last Wednesday evening during two open houses sponsored by the Idaho Department of Transportation.

During the companion hour-long sessions, residents were asked to offer views on how to make the well-traveled roadway safer as 10,000 cars, trucks, buses, bicycles and people all vie for a share of the highway each day.

The opening session, held at the Hauser City Hall, primarily focused on how to better improve the interchanges at Pleasantview, Hollister Hills and Hauser Lake Roads. Later, the ITD contingent moved to the Rathdrum City Hall where a dozen interested citizens patiently listened to the “problem at hand.”

“Basically, we're faced with a highway with 40 interchanges and 213 approaches,” ITD spokeswoman Lisa Key said, adding “and the site of 246 accidents in the past four years.”

Commuters working in the Spokane Valley use Highway 53 to and from their jobs, she said, “and big trucks use it largely to avoid freeway traffic as well as weigh stations.”

“The IDT recognizes the many problems along this stretch of the highway,” she offered, “as a reason we're

here – to get your input on ways you might improve this highway into a safer travel route.”

Primarily, Key said, transportation engineers work with three components, “access, mobility and safety which form a balancing act all hinged around the traveling public's right to expect safe roadways, freedom of movement and efficient use of highway funds.”

Higher speed limits and less access points – again a balancing act – she said tends to increase “the points of potential conflict” – in layman's terms, more wrecks.

It appeared, at least during the Rathdrum session, that extending Main Street from Coeur d'Alene Avenue west to Greensferry Road would be popular along with the eventual elimination of the Mill Street railroad crossing.

Key asked that anyone with suggestions as to improving the highway would “please send them to David Evans and Associates, Inc., 663 W. Canfield Ave., Coeur d'Alene, 83815. Make sure you note that your ideas pertain to the Highway 53 project.”

Suggestions, she said, will “all be considered as our staff begins the work of compiling the best approach to making this stretch of the Highway 53 a safer route for all.”

Boot Prints in Snow Lead to Burglary Arrest

Boot prints in the snow last week led Rathdrum Police to the arrest of 19-year-old Gary R. Hilbert, Jr. of Pineview St., Rathdrum, as a suspect in the recent rash of vehicle burglaries.

Hilbert was held in the Kootenai County Jail under a \$50,000 bond on three counts of auto burglary. At the time of his arrest last week, the suspect was on probation for a January possession of marijuana charge after having been sentenced in June to 14 days in jail on an unrelated drug charge in June.

The latest incident, according to Police Chief Kevin Fuhr, involved a series of some 39 vehicle burglaries – most of which “only change” and small items were stolen. Some reports, however, involved the theft of ipods, GPS systems and various electronic devices, the chief said.

On Nov. 19, nine break-ins were reported along Sunrise, Sunset, Tudor, Lakeland, Crenshaw and Wright Streets.

In virtually every instance, a “very distinct boot print was left in the newly fallen snow. We received information that led to a person of interest,” he said.

The suspect “admitted he'd broken into several vehicles the night before as well

as several others over the past two months,” Fuhr's report indicated. A pair of boots matching the boot print left in the snow was found in the suspect's possession, along with many stolen items from recent break-ins.

Footprints from a second set of boots have led police to suspect others may be involved in the many break-ins. So far, no other arrests have been made, the chief said, indicating the investigation is ongoing.

Sheriffs Tribute Being Unveiled

A last minute addition to the December d'Lights festivities is the unveiling of George Holcomb's much-anticipated Recognition of the Kootenai County Sheriffs Department as the first “official” tribute in the Old Jail.

The multi-panel display was funded through a \$2,000 grant from Panhandle State Bank.

The professionally-produced tribute includes a number of photographs together with text outlining the history of the Kootenai County Sheriff's Department going back to 1892.

The unveiling will be at the jail at a time to be announced.

Annual Holiday Events Unfold Toys for Tots, Holidays and Heroes

The holiday season kicks off with two popular “events”: the Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program and the annual Holidays and Heroes Program sponsored by the many area law enforcement agencies, including the Rathdrum Police Department.

Toys for Tots donations may be dropped off at Betty Kiefer Elementary and Lakeland Jr. High Schools, the Rathdrum Lions Club, Edward Jones Investments, the Nagel Insurance office, Stein's Family Foods, Twin Lakes Realty, Wells Fargo Bank and The Star newspaper office.

Last year, 13, 675 toy donations were received, providing gifts for 2,128 children.

Applications for toys can be made at the “well marked building” at the west side of

Riverstone Village, according to this year's campaign chairman Ron Barnett, who is reachable at 818-515-6164.

The always popular Holidays and Heroes program is scheduled for Dec. 11 with children being picked up at their home by a police officer in a patrol car and escorted to both the Spokane Valley and Post Falls WalMart for a day of shopping. Nearly 100 youngsters participated in last year's program.

After their shopping, the young guests are driven to the Greyhound Park for a visit with Santa while volunteers wrap their gifts and prepare food baskets for their families. At day's end, the officers drive their youngsters, their gifts and their baskets back home.

Participating agencies in addition to the Rathdrum and

Spirit Lake Police Departments include the Spokane and Kootenai County Sheriff Departments, Post Falls, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho State and Coeur d'Alene Tribal Police and the Kootenai Fire Department. All participants donate their time for the occasion. Generally four or five Rathdrum officers volunteer for the program with a like number of youngsters getting involved.

Cash or food donations are being accepted at any of the participating agencies. The more the donations, the more children can be served. Anyone wishing to assist the agencies in their “special day” may contact the Coeur d'Alene Police Department Community Relations Division at 769-2363.

Depending on donations, the program is “usually” able to provide \$300 per child.