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HOLIDAY 2025

MAGAZINE

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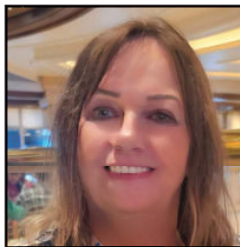
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Bret P. Coale	Hughes Tenney Postlewait Coale LLC	Decatur	217.428.5383	Commercial Litigation; Medical Malpractice Defense; PI Def: General
R. Samuel Postlewait	Hughes Tenney Postlewait Coale LLC	Decatur	217.428.5383	Agriculture; Close/Priv Held; Comm Lit; RE: Comm; Trust/Will/Estate
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William J. Harrington	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General
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John J. Waldman	Kanoski Bresney	Decatur	217.429.3509	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
Jack Kiley	Kiley Klein Ltd	Decatur	217.428.0948	Civil Appellate; Comm Lit; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; PI Def: Gen; PI: Gen
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Joshua J. Dubbelde	Samuels Miller Schroeder Jackson & Sly	Decatur	217.429.4325	Close/Private Held Bus; RE: Comm; RE: Residential; Trust/Will/Estate
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EFFINGHAM

HOLIDAY 2025

MAGAZINE

FEATURE STORY

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EHS Red Regiment Marching Band

by Marie Adamick



Junior tuba section leader Jackson Somodi (far left in red) and senior saxophone section leader Sam Collins (second to left wearing sunglasses) practice drill and music during a September evening rehearsal. Marie Adamick photo



ON THE COVER:

A woman stops Santa to take a selfie with him while he spreads Christmas cheer to the crowd.

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For nearly 20 years, Ashleigh Crockett has gone all out decorating her home for the holidays – not just Christmas, but all the holidays. Even Flag Day.

“I mean, who doesn’t love holidays?” she asked Cathy Griffith. “It just puts you in the spirit for all the holidays.”

It’s that time of year to get in the spirit of the holidays, and this issue of Effingham Magazine is doing that in a few ways.

Besides spending time with Ashleigh and her beautiful home, we look back at last year’s Hometown Christmas in downtown Effingham. That annual event is always fun for the whole family.

Cathy also shares with readers why, over three days in December, Effingham fire trucks can be seen around town, traversing nearly every street in the city.

They’re not looking for fires. They’re escorting Santa Claus, bringing the Jolly Old Elf to residents, rather than them coming to see him.

The Santa Run, a tradition that started three years ago when Brant Yochum became the new chief of the Effingham Fire Department, is not your typical Santa visit. Yochum had seen similar events in other cities and was inspired to bring it to Effingham, but he made sure to add a local twist to make it unique.

“Sometimes, our Santa Claus will get off the truck and visit with the kids, take a picture,” he said.

Meanwhile, Marie Adamick visited with the 2025 Effingham High School Red Regiment Marching Band, which won several awards this season for its show “Arcane,” which was inspired by wizards and magic.

Throughout the season, the band, led by EHS Band Director Trent Mason and Junior High School Band Director Logan Andrews, competed in five competitions and performed in one exhibition.

Saxophone Section Leader Sam Collins, a senior, enjoys band because of the friends he has made.

“I like the community that we build after years of being in marching band. The only extracurriculars I do are purely from a band standpoint, and if I hadn’t been in band for any of those, there is not a very good likelihood that I would have as many friends as I do now,” Sam told Marie.

May your friends and family have wonderful holidays this year.

Jeff Long
Editor



Jeff Long is the editor of the Effingham Daily News. He is a 1987 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has worked for newspapers in England, Pennsylvania and Virginia. For 13 years, he was a reporter and later an editor at the Chicago Tribune. A past president and current board member of the Illinois Associated Press Media Editors, he lives in Altamont with his wife, Karen.



Cathy Griffith is news editor of the Effingham Daily News. She is a 1998 graduate of Eastern Illinois University with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. She has worked at the Daily News for 22 years in news and magazine publications. She is a lifelong resident of Effingham, where she resides with her husband, Tim, and daughter, Leah.



Marie Adamick is the newest reporter at the Effingham Daily News. Before deciding to major in journalism, she considered majoring in international business or chemistry. She graduated from University of Cincinnati in 2024 with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and a minor in History. A greater Cincinnati native, she enjoys traveling, collecting music, and going on hikes. She recently moved to Effingham to start her job at the paper and has family in Wisconsin, Cincinnati and St. Louis.

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SANTA RUN

slated for mid-December

'The kids embrace the fire truck. They love the fire truck'

Cathy Griffith

Effingham Magazine

Submitted Photos

Over three days in December, Effingham fire trucks can be seen around town, traversing nearly every street in the city. But it's not to look for fires or put them out.

They're escorting Santa Claus, bringing the Jolly Old Elf to residents, rather than them coming to see him.

The Santa Run, a tradition that started three years ago when Brant Yochum became the new chief of the Effingham Fire Department, is not your typical Santa visit. Yochum had seen similar events in other cities and was inspired to bring it to Effingham, but he made sure to add a local twist to make it unique.

"Sometimes, our Santa Claus will get off the truck and visit with the kids, take a picture," he said.

Yochum admits firefighters weren't sure what to think of it when he first suggested it.

"I think it was like 'what do you want to do?' he said.

But after two Runs and gearing up for the third this year, Jenn Alwardt, executive secretary to the fire chief, can attest "everybody loves it."

To cover as many streets as possible in a single night, while still observing bedtimes, the department divides the city into two areas, with one fire truck covering one area and a second covering the other.

Over three days, the fire trucks set out between 5:30 and 6 p.m. and head back to the fire station by 8 p.m.

To give residents advance notice when fire trucks would be coming to their street, Alwardt last year began posting live updates on Facebook of the fire trucks' locations. Alwardt said she has even had some people call to notify them that they were missed.

Jake Burrell, dressed as Santa, gives a thumbs-up.

"I'll take it down and get a hold of whoever is in that spot and make sure they go back to them. It was kind of nice last year since they knew where we were at and knew if they were getting missed," she said.

However, some streets are too challenging for the fire trucks to drive down. In that case, people will meet the fire trucks at parking lots, such as the East Side Veterinary Clinic on Jefferson Avenue.

Each fire truck is accompanied by a staff car that serves as a spotter and communicates with the truck via a radio channel.

For example, Yochum said, "We'll just tell 'hey, let Santa know there's a kid on the right-hand house coming up.'"

For some kids, it's not only a chance to see Santa Claus but also the fire truck.

"The kids embrace the fire truck. They love the fire truck," said Yochum.

Aside from putting smiles on faces, the goal of the Run is to encourage fire prevention.

"It helps our ISO (Insurance Services Office rating) cause it gives us community outreach. So, when we go out, we hand out some kind of fire prevention information. But then they get to see Santa Claus, and that's what draws the people out," said Yochum.

While adults get educational literature, Santa makes sure to bring candy canes for the kids. Many stand outside to greet Santa. However, some choose to stay inside.

"Some families make the choice just to wave from the living room window, which is really sweet too," said Alwardt. "They just stay in if they can't make it out."

Alwardt and Yochum note that parents appear just as excited as their children.

"Even people who don't have kids will come out," said Yochum.

"We had a couple of elderly neighborhoods where they were just so excited and stood at the front door of their houses and waved," added Alwardt.

"They have told me, 'This is just awesome that you guys are doing this,'" said Yochum.

The Run also provides firefighters with an opportunity to socialize outside of work.

"So, whenever we get together for that, it's hard not to stand around and visit," said Alwardt.

However, when it comes to starting time, Alwardt ensures they stick to the schedule.

"If it's supposed to start at 6 and it's 6:02, I'm out the door, go," she said.

Yochum said the event serves as a moral boost for the firefighters, putting them in the spirit of the season.

"It's a really good time," he said.

Paid-on-call firefighter Jake Burrell has been donning the Santa suit since the Run began. He rides on the fire truck all

three nights. He really gets into the role, according to Alwardt and Yochum, who said he asks the kids what they want for Christmas and lets them know the number of nights until Santa will arrive with those gifts.

"He does a really good job with it. He's got really big passion," said Yochum.

Alwardt said Burrell is a huge help with the program every year.

"He really does everything he can to make sure this program happens," she said.

Burrell had only been with the department about a year when the program started and didn't hesitate to volunteer.

"I just wanted to help out the department as much as I could," he said.

Burrell is finally realizing his long-time dream of being a firefighter and also of playing Santa.

"I like seeing the joys on the little kids' faces, and, believe it or not, there are actually some people my age and older that really get a kick out of that when we come around. And I like

seeing that, especially that time of year, at Christmastime, because it's supposed to be a time of joy," he said.

Burrell loves it so much that he has begun donning the suit for others, including the Special Olympics and St. Anthony Church.

Burrell said Alwardt and Yochum are Santa's big helpers when it comes to the Run.

"She helps me out with everything I need to try to get organized," said Burrell of Alwardt. "Jenn plays a big, big role in all this stuff. She does pretty much all the routing - where



Effingham Firefighter Jake Burrell has been donning the Santa suit since the Santa Run began.



Aside from putting smiles on faces, the goal of the Run is to encourage fire prevention.

we're going to go from night to night."

Burrell notes his wife is a big contributor as well.

"She runs in the truck with us and will actually take photos of the kids," he said.

Burrell enjoys getting out and seeing the kids' faces with big smiles on them.

"Smiles on the kids' faces is what this Run is all about," he said.

Burrell recalls one girl during the Run who uses a keyboard to talk. She always comes up and gives him a great big hug and types what she wants for Christmas.

"Actually makes a tear come to your eye when you see something like that. You know you're out there really putting a smile on the faces of children," he said.

The Santa Run this year is scheduled for Dec. 15, 16 and 17.

Shown is Firefighter Jake Burrell dressed as Santa in front of an Effingham fire truck.

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Ashleigh Crockett kept with the theme of her blue and white living room in a past Christmas decor. Submitted photo

FOR EFFINGHAM WOMAN, THE ORNAMENT DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE

Cathy Griffith

Effingham Magazine

For nearly 20 years, Ashleigh Crockett has gone all out decorating her home for the holidays – not just Christmas, but all the holidays, including Flag Day.

“I mean, who doesn’t love holidays. It just puts you in the spirit for all the holidays,” she mused.

After she relocated to Effingham and moved into her newly built home on Newcomb Drive in 2021, she set her sights on the city’s annual holiday display contest. She entered for the first time in 2023 and lost.

“I was so bummed,” she recalled.

So, she decided to up her game and try again the following year. To her surprise, she won.

Passing motorists were greeted by giant letters spelling “Merry Christmas” in front of her home, flanked by two giant candy canes. The windows were adorned with large snowflakes, and the entrance with snow people, and more candy canes, all vibrantly lit.

But what they couldn’t see was that inside the home were rooms full of decorations. From stairways to bathrooms, every nook and cranny was adorned with festive cheer.

It’s an annual tradition for Crockett, whose penchant for decorating stems from her mother. Growing up, Crockett’s mother would decorate their whole house for the holidays.

“I thought it was pretty cool. So then, I started collecting stuff and just kind of rolled on from there,” Crockett explained.

Crockett started her year-round obsession with holiday decorating in 2006 when she lived in Virginia. It was an expressive outlet for her as a forensic accountant for the Department of Defense – now known as the Department of War – at the Pentagon.

“I sit behind a desk all day looking at numbers. That’s not a lot of fun, decorating is,” said Crockett, who now works remotely from home since she moved to Effingham to be close to her parents. “It’s kind of a happy place, and you can express your personality in decorating.”

At her home in Virginia, Crockett decorated 80 Christmas trees of various sizes and hosted big Christmas parties. Now that she has a smaller house, she only displays five or six full-size trees.

Still, Crockett finds setting up her trove of decorations to be time-consuming.

“When you’re setting up a tree, you want everything to be perfect,” she said.

Crockett stores all the decorations in her basement in



Submitted photo

Clockwise from left: Ashleigh Crockett gave this tree a “Wizard of Oz” theme one year. Crockett stands in front of her home in October. Gingerbread was the theme of Ashleigh Crockett’s kitchen last year.

organized sections for each holiday, including Easter, Fourth of July, Valentine’s Day, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and, of course, Christmas. The decorations consume the entire basement, with Christmas taking up the most space.

“I kind of laugh when I have people come over to do heating or air conditioning maintenance, wondering what they’re thinking when they go down to my basement,” she said.

Crockett gets help from her 14-year-old daughter, Patience, in carrying the bins up the stairs. She admits her daughter is sometimes reluctant to bring them up and thinks her decorating is too much.

“But then once it’s all up, she really likes it and that’s with every holiday,” she said.

Crockett likes to change her décor every year, from color schemes – last year’s Christmas scheme was red and white – to decorating themes. And when it comes to decorating Christmas trees, she has no limits, having created a golf-themed tree, a wine-themed tree and one with penguins, to name a few. But one of her favorites was a Dr. Seuss tree.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do this year,” she said as fall arrived. “I haven’t decided yet.”

Crockett has no method for choosing each year’s décor.

“I just think about it. Think about what I want and the colors I want to use. It’s just kind of my own brain. I talk to my mom. See what she



Cathy Griffith photo



Submitted photo

thinks too,” she said. “She has a great eye.”

Jackie Ruholl says her role is helping bring her daughter’s visions to life.

Ruholl has been collecting decorations for decades and has even more than Crockett, enough to fill a big barn from top to bottom, which Crockett has borrowed from, including the giant Merry Christmas letters in last year’s outdoor display.

Like her daughter, Ruholl’s love of decorating also stems from her childhood. Her mother would take her downtown to see all the animatronic figures in the storefronts in Texas, where they lived, and in New York. As an adult, Ruholl started collecting them when the stores closed.

“I have a lot of the elves and penguins that are all animated. They come out once in a while, but most of the time they stay in a climate-controlled area,” she said.

Ruholl said she and her daughter are close, and for them, decorating is more than just a physical activity they enjoy together.

“It’s good therapy. It’s kind of nice we can talk the whole time we’re doing it,” she said.

Ruholl, who decorates a few residences and businesses for Christmas, said they are both picky when it comes to decorating.

“We just want it perfect,” she said. “We just want to put a smile on your

face. We want everybody to enjoy it.”

Crockett describes her style as classy and inviting.

“I think Christmas is all about classic and home,” she said.

“Like ‘oh, that’s awesome looking, I want to go into that house and celebrate with them.’”

While she doesn’t subscribe to the Griswold style of decorating on display in the movie “Christmas Vacation,” she does consider herself a maximalist.

“Maybe I go a little overboard,” she admits.

That’s because it puts her in the spirit of the holiday.

“Just makes me happy. Cause you know, when you’re surrounded by beautiful twinkle lights, it just makes you feel like a Norman Rockwell kind of thing. It makes you feel like you’re for sure at home. And you’re wanting to celebrate with your family and friends,” she said.

Neighbor Jayne Genta looks forward to seeing what Crockett will put out next.

“I get excited that she does it cause it’s fun to have somebody else who has the passion and loves it like I do,” she said.

Her favorite of Crockett’s outdoor holiday decorations is

**“[Decorating] is good therapy.
It’s kind of nice we can talk the
whole time we’re doing it.”**

**— Jackie Ruholl,
Ashleigh Crockett’s mother**

Christmas, which she realized extended inside when she attended a holiday open house that Crockett and her daughter hosted after moving in.

“It was beautiful. It was a house full of Christmas inside as well as she does outside,” she said.

Crockett said she gets a lot of compliments.

“Some people come by my house just to see what I have up. So, that kind of makes you feel

good,” she said.

Genta said it’s fun for the whole neighborhood, which also has other decorated homes.

“It’s a nice cul-de-sac of beautiful homes that decorate and get the spirit going on. It just makes you happy as you drive by. A lot of people drive by and go slow and enjoy that,” she said.

Crockett makes all the décor decisions except for the tree in Patience’s room. She chooses what goes on that.

“She’s been wanting to do a dog tree. So, I’ve been collecting dog ornaments,” Crockett said, adding the year before Patience wanted a dinosaur-themed tree.

“I know it sounds really funny or weird, but it actually

Ashleigh Crockett’s home at 1309 Newcomb Drive won Visit Effingham’s People’s Choice Award in the Holiday Lights & Festive Sights last year. Five hundred votes were cast. Submitted photo.





Ashleigh Crockett stands among just some of her Christmas decorations she stores in her basement. Cathy Griffith photo

turned out really good,” she said. Her daughter has also chosen “Frozen,” along with mermaid and unicorn-themed trees.

Crockett likes to shop for unique ornaments at local specialty shops. But if she knows what she wants, she will log onto eBay and see if anyone has it. If she can’t find the item she’s looking for, she will find someone who can make it.

“There’s a lady that made my Santa. So, if I wanted another type of figurine, I could message her and maybe have one made. It’s just networking, finding out who does what,” she said.

She does shop at commercial chains like Hobby Lobby, as well as “re-imagines” the décor she currently has. One Christmas decoration

that is special to her is a White House tree in her office, which she puts up every year. She has collected every official White House ornament released annually.

Crockett has even been to the White House at Christmastime, an experience she describes as “awesome.”

Her dream has been to be one of the volunteers who decorate the White House. Unfortunately, when she lived in Virginia, her work schedule always interfered.

“If I could do that, I would have done that in a heartbeat,” she said.

Still, Crockett wishes she could turn her decorating into a full-time job.

“But I think you need to live in a bigger city to be able to get the clients,” she said.

As Crockett decided on her Christmas décor for this year, she noted fall is her busiest time, between work and getting ready for the holidays.

“Our year-end is September. So, we’re really busy during September until Oct. 1. I’m always stressed because I’m constantly working, and by the time I’m finished, I’m like OK, I get to take a breath. No, you can’t take a breath. Now, it’s time to decorate,” she said.



Ashleigh Crockett decorated a tree with a Dr. Seuss theme one year. It’s still one of her favorite trees she has decorated. Submitted photo



Snow people adorn the entryway of Ashleigh Crockett’s home last year. Submitted photo



Ashleigh Crockett stands among her fall and Halloween decorations in her living room. The witch’s hat on the one to her left lifts up to reveal secret storage for candy. Cathy Griffith photo



Effingham HOMETOWN Christmas

Organized by the Effingham County Chamber, the annual Hometown Christmas always draws a festive crowd to downtown Effingham.

“The spirit is just the best part. The people coming out, everyone is just kind and lovely,” said Joe Sippers’ manager Brittany Sunderman during the 2024 event. “You smell peppermint in the air, and you’re, like, in love with Christmas.”

Last year, the festivities began at Joe’s Pizza for Lunch with Santa, followed soon after with crafts, cookie decorating, making reindeer food, horse-drawn carriage rides, a live reindeer and tractor train rides.

Just after dark, the Lighted Christmas parade began outside of Baseball Card Connection, traveled down Jefferson Avenue to The Heart Theater and ended at 3rd Street. Following was a concert performed by Fine Arts County Effingham (FACE) inside the Effingham County Museum.

As you prepare for the 2025 Hometown Christmas scheduled for Nov. 29, here are some memories to look back on from 2024.



A horse-drawn carriage gives locals a trip around downtown Effingham.



A woman stops Santa to take a selfie with him while he spreads Christmas cheer to the crowd.



Mike Landrus waves while driving his decorated white Jeep during the parade.



Amaya Interiano, wearing her purple coat, hugs and takes a picture with Santa Claus at the end of the Lighted Christmas Parade in downtown Effingham.



Dance Life members dressed up in costumes surrounded by blue lights on their float during the parade.



Ethan Miller from W.S. Broom and Co. dressed as the Grinch with his dog Gunner as Max playing music during the parade.



Fine Arts County Effingham (FACE) Director Nicholas Tkachuk speaks to the audience after the band played "Jingle Bells Forever" in the Effingham County Museum during Hometown Christmas.



HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital presented a Nativity scene with help from volunteers with lit Christmas necklaces handing out candy during the Hometown Christmas Lighted Christmas Parade.



Two lucky kids get their picture taken with Santa Claus after the Lighted Christmas Parade at North 4th Street and West Jefferson Avenue.



A decorated City of Effingham truck travels through downtown shooting out fake snow from the back.



Mill Road Thresherman Association included a Nativity scene and Christmas lights on their float.



BnP Roofing's decorated truck and trailer travels through downtown during the parade.



People fill Santa's Workshop heated tent to make reindeer food, decorate cookies and more.



Yvonne Dahnke from Dahnke Family Farms with a live reindeer during Hometown Christmas 2024.



Santa Claus hops off his fire truck to give hugs to children near the end of the Christmas Parade



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Nov. 21 8:00 pm	Hairball	\$39	\$39	\$39
Nov. 22 7:00 pm	Michael Cavanaugh Christmas	\$55	\$45	\$35
Dec. 06 7:00 pm	Who Brought the Humbug?	\$55	\$40	\$30
Dec. 07 7:00 pm	Lonestar & Collin Raye	\$80	\$65	\$50
Dec. 12 7:00 pm	Texas Tenors	\$60	\$50	\$40
Dec. 13 3:00 pm	Polar Express (Interactive Movie)	\$40	\$20	\$20
Dec. 19 7:00 pm	Jingle Bell Jam	\$30	\$30	\$30
Dec. 20 7:00 pm	Christmas with Elvis - Scott Wattles	\$50	\$40	\$30
Jan. 17 3:00 pm	Frozen (Interactive Movie)	\$40	\$20	\$20
Jan. 23 7:00 pm	Matt Dusk Sings Sinatra	\$50	\$40	\$30
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Feb. 06 7:00 pm	Hee Haw Honey Reunion	\$60	\$45	\$35
Feb. 07 7:00 pm	Mike Super 2.OH!	\$60	\$40	\$30
Feb. 12 7:00 pm	Aaron Lewis	\$90	\$70	\$55
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Feb. 27 7:00 pm	The Barricade Boys	\$53	\$43	\$33
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Mar. 06 7:00 pm	Celebrating Meat Loaf	\$65	\$50	\$40
Mar. 12 7:00 pm	Vitamin String Quartet	\$55	\$45	\$35
Mar. 13 7:00 pm	Pauly Shore	\$70	\$50	\$35
Mar. 21 7:00 pm	Mama I'm a Big Girl Now	\$65	\$50	\$35
Mar. 27 7:00 pm	The Traveling Salvation: A Tribute to Neil Diamond	\$50	\$40	\$30
Mar. 28 7:00 pm	Fake News: A Tribute to Huey Lewis	\$50	\$40	\$30
Apr. 25 7:00 pm	Clay Walker	\$80	\$70	\$60



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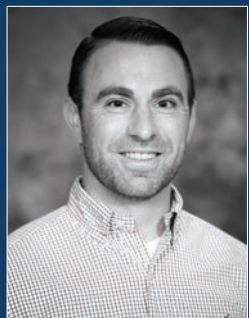
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'I like the community that we build'



EHS RED REGIMENT MARCHING BAND

Junior tuba section leader Jackson Somodi (far left in red) and senior saxophone section leader Sam Collins (second to left wearing sunglasses) practice drill and music during a September evening rehearsal.

Story and Photos
Marie Adamick
Effingham Magazine

The 2025 Effingham High School Red Regiment Marching Band show, "Arcane," was inspired by wizards and magic. The marching band won several awards this season for its hard work and dedication to the show, including outstanding color guard and best music.

Throughout the season, the band, led by EHS Band Director Trent Mason and Junior High School Band Director Logan Andrews, competed in five competitions and performed one exhibition show.

Starting the competition season strong in September at the Metro East Marching Classic in O'Fallon, the class 1A band won best music, best general effect and first place in its class. Following this was the Tiger Ambush Classic in Edwardsville where the Red Regiment took home Outstanding Color Guard, first place in class 1A and Grand Champion of both 1A and 2A classes. A week later, the award-winning band hosted its own competition at EHS for over 20 marching bands in central and southern Illinois.

The final three competitions of the marching season included the Illinois State Marching Band Championships at Illinois State University, Bands of America: St. Louis Super Regional, and the Illinois Marching Band Championship at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The Red Regiment competed against more than 40 bands at each one.

Illinois doesn't have an official state competition, said Andrews. So both the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign competition and the Illinois State Marching Band Championships bill themselves as the state competition.



Effingham High School Band Director Trent Mason (left) and Effingham Junior High School Band Director Logan Andrews (right) proudly show off the 2025 Tiger Ambush Classic Grand Champion – A/AA trophy the marching band won at their second competition of the season.

"A lot of schools don't go to both, so you're never really comparing apples to apples," said Andrews. "We have gone to U of I every year for years and years. This will be our first time that we've gone to Illinois State. ... The only other time to my knowledge that Effingham went was in, like, 2009."

This was the band's second year competing in a Bands of America competition. During last year's Bands of America competition, the Red Regiment placed eighth out of 20 in class 1A and 67th out of 88 total bands.

"We knew we were jumping into the deep end, but we were pretty pleased with the result," said Andrews. "It was really about the experience."

The fantasy theme for "Arcane" was born on Halloween 2024 when a handful of band students walked into the band room dressed as wizards. This prompted Mason to ask Andrews about creating a wizard and magic themed marching band show. Andrews shared Mason's sentiment, and they began brainstorming show titles. The duo landed on "Arcane" because it's simple and catchy, said Andrews.

It wasn't until a month into the marching season when Mason and Andrews realized "Arcane" is also the name of the popular "League of Legends" show when one of the show designers asked if the two were related. Neither Mason nor Andrews knew about the show.

"We even had a judge comment about it: 'I wonder if this has to do with the show 'Arcane,'" said Mason. "'That character is purple, and you guys have purple.' I learned that in that judge tape."

"Arcane" uses three backdrop screens, a cauldron and a wizard's tower that a father of a marching band member built. He has built some of the previous marching band shows' props, as well as the school's musicals' sets.

"The three threads we started with were the first being a summoner, and then a protector and the final movement being an illusionist. That still is kind of maintained in the current show design, but the design kind of took a different turn after that point. So it's a little bit less concrete than our original vision, but it's still kind of the inspiration," said Andrews. "Color-wise, purple is a big focus because it has that mystical, magic-related vibe. The color guard costumes are various shades of purple, but they all start in a lighter purple cloak. Then at the third movement, those are shed, and there's a darker – but still bright – purple."

At the end of each school year, Mason and Andrews hold a few after-school meetings where they teach students who are interested in becoming a drum major the basics of conducting, as well as how those techniques transfer to conducting on the field. Then, auditions are held, which include an interview, conducting through basic conducting patterns at various tempos and conducting a song of their choosing, making sure to include aspects such as dynamics and queues.

This was Lydia Young and Nevaeh Musson's first year being drum majors. During their freshman and sophomore years, Young marched flute, and Musson marched trumpet. Although the juniors were the only two to audition to be drum majors, Mason and Andrews commended them for doing so, especially because there wasn't a senior to lead them along the way. Young said she took notes her entire sophomore year.



Effingham Junior High School Band Director Logan Andrews corrects the marching band members' drill during a September evening rehearsal.



Junior flute section leader Ella Knierim practices "Arcane" music during a September evening rehearsal.



Performance 3: Junior drum major Nevaeh Musson conducts a section of the Red Regiment that's marching around one of the three lit backdrops and the cauldron during their exhibition performance at the Effingham Marching Invitational on Oct. 4.

Junior drum major Lydia Young took notes on previous drum majors during her sophomore year. Here, she conducts a section of the Red Regiment during an evening rehearsal.

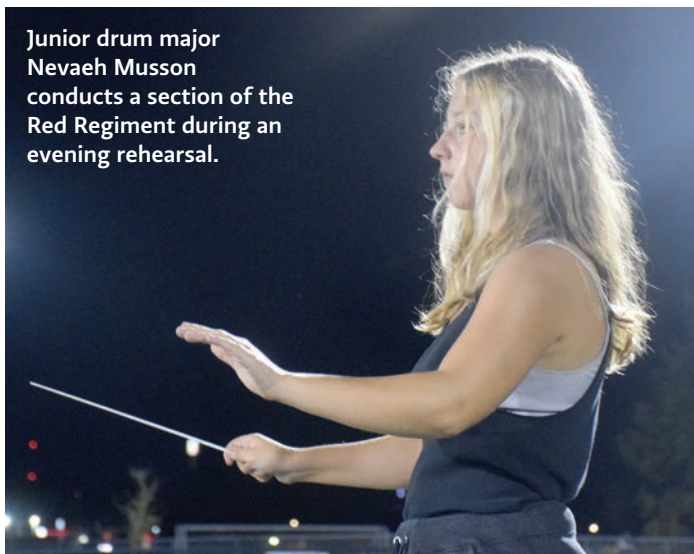


"It's terrifying, but it's cool because me and Lydia are two polar-opposite people, and we're able to just come together and be able to work together," said Musson.

After Young and Musson were selected to be this season's drum majors, over the summer they attended Phantom Regiment's academy for drum majors since EHS does not have any specific training for drum majors. There were 53 other people with various experiences at the academy, said Young. Besides keeping time, Young and Musson assisted Mason and Andrews throughout the season by fixing mistakes the directors didn't catch, taking equipment to the field, keeping morale up and sometimes running stretches and warmups.

One way the duo kept morale up is through certain traditions at the end of each rehearsal and marching band season. During rehearsals, Young and Musson kept an eye out for a few members that went above and beyond. Then at the end of rehearsal, they read off the jokes on the back of Laffy Taffies and distributed them to those they noticed working hard. At the end of the season, every member got a "trophy," which were Little Debbie snacks. Last year, Young's trophy was "Small and Mighty," and Musson's was "You Guys Should Order the Number 12 from Taco Bell with a Baja Blast. It is Gas." As drum majors, they also "encourage and uplift good perfor-

Junior drum major Nevaeh Musson conducts a section of the Red Regiment during an evening rehearsal.



mance," said Young.

If either saw someone making a mistake, they fixed it one-on-one rather than calling them out in front of everyone.

"Mason has said that we should do it like a sandwich: We give a compliment, and then tell them what they should fix, and then give another compliment," said Musson. "Then it's not like, 'Oh, we're targeting you' type of thing."

Both Young and Musson enjoyed seeing the show come together from an observer's viewpoint, especially because it's their first year doing so.

"It's amazing to just see this group of people – a lot of people have a lot of different personalities – but they come together and are able to become one," said Musson. "It's just amazing to see that group effort and teamwork."

Those interested in being a section leader complete an application and an interview with Mason and Andrews. Mason also tells the student that along with the sit-down interview, he observes how the student does over the course of a school year to see if they would fit well in a leadership position.

This is Jackson Somodi's first time being section leader for the tubas. Now a junior, he had always wanted to join marching

band. In eighth grade a junior from the wind ensemble told him he needed to do it, which really solidified his decision to join. Since joining, he likes seeing the progress from the start of the season to the end, along with making friendships.

Somodi plans to attend college to be a music teacher, but his dream is to be a tuba professor.

"I'm gonna be all up in band," said Somodi. "I really idolize the guy at ISU, the tuba professor there. I think he's really cool, and I wanna do stuff like he does, like just be able to teach college classes and stuff like that."

Flute Section Leader Ella Knierim, a junior, and Saxophone



Deb Mosher – a volunteer of eight years for the Effingham High School Red Regiment – with her granddaughter, Ivy Durkin, who played in the percussion pit.

Section Leader Sam Collins, a senior, share Somodi's sentiment about making friends.

"I like the community that we build after years of being in marching band. The only extracurriculars I do are purely from a band standpoint, and if I hadn't been in band for any of those, there is not a very good likelihood that I would have as many friends as I do now," said Collins.

Outside of marching band, Collins is also involved with jazz band, winter drumline and concert band. Next year in college, Collins plans on joining a music program and a marching band.

"I'd love to go into music. ... I'd love to be in one of those college marching bands, but if I also want to have money after I graduate college, I need to look at a more affordable one. And a lot of the more affordable ones don't have marching bands," said Knierim. "The one I'm looking at now is Lake Land, and they don't have a marching band. There is an option to join Eastern's marching band and march with them. So I'm highly considering that."

It takes a village to organize and put on a successful marching band show, and the Red Regiment couldn't do it without the help from their volunteers, like Amy Crear - Collins' mother. During the Effingham Marching Invitational in the first week of October, she volunteered to work the whole day to help with scoring, director's packets and one of the entrances to the bleachers to make sure people didn't enter or exit during a performance. Although this was her fourth year volunteering, it was her first time monitoring the bleachers.

"It's all very interesting," said Crear. "It's amazing how well the organization has done putting an event like this together. I mean, 25 bands and there's not been any major hiccups or anything. It's impressive, quite impressive."

Crear marched clarinet her freshman year of high school and enjoyed it, but she had to quit due to personal reasons.

"I loved going to competitions. ... It's great hanging out with your friends, and then seeing other bands and what their shows entail, what their shows represent, their outfits, props," said Crear. "Back when I was in marching band, it was nothing this extravagant. ... We didn't have these big props and elaborate costumes and things like that. So it's very interesting. I love watching the shows."

This was Deb Mosher's eighth year volunteering for the Red Regiment. Her granddaughter, Ivy Durkin, is a senior who played percussion in "Arcane."

When Mosher was in high school, she marched trombone all four years. Mosher's main volunteer duty is to manage the marching band's uniforms and keep them organized, but she helps out wherever she can. She rides the bus with the band kids to every competition and loves it, but she might quit volunteering because of her age.

"It's a lot with the uniforms because you're trying to get across to the kids that this is, like, a \$700 uniform, and we have to take care of it because we're not getting any more anytime soon," said Mosher. "But they're learning. By the end of the season, they know how to hang up their uniforms correctly."

The marching band won several awards this season, including outstanding color guard and best music.

During the Effingham Marching Invitational, Mosher helped monitor one of the bleacher's entrances, like Crear did, and she was amazed that more students than parents waited until in between performances to enter and exit the bleachers.

"We had one kid - he's one of my best friend's sons - and his first year was just really rough. He wasn't a people person, very, very shy, and by the end of the year, we say he found his people," said Mosher. "He's a drummer, and he's a senior now, and he's just not the same kid. But that's what happens when they find their people. They find where they belong."

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Pictured with the winning scarecrow are, from left, RuthAnn Brady; Kathryn Morgan, RuthAnn's sister who lives in Wasilla, Alaska; Jeanie Eident; Lori Cora; Michaela Phillips; AnnMarie Cora; Becky DeWeese; and Macklan Johnson in front.

FAMILY GOES TO ALASKA AND WINS STATE FAIR CONTEST

Waynette Carter
For Effingham Magazine

Submitted Photos

Since 1936, the Alaska State Fair has featured record-setting giant vegetables, beautiful flower gardens, concerts, and Alaskan and Alaska native culture. People come from all over the world to enjoy the tasty food, great entertainment and time together with their family.

One of the highlights of the fair is the "Build a Scarecrow Contest." The contest is made up of eight teams that can only use string, scissors, paper plates, markers, donated clothes, hay, a wooden frame and their imaginations to create the perfect scarecrow in 45 minutes.

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On Aug. 15, RuthAnn Brady of Watson accepted the challenge and created a team consisting of four generations of family members who were vacationing with her in Alaska. Her team members were her sister Kathy Morgan, sisters-in-law Becky DeWeese of Effingham and Jeanie Eident of Mason, daughter Lori Cora, granddaughters Michaela Phillips and AnnMarie Cora, and great-grandsons Macklan and Merrick Johnson.

As the contest began, they raced to pick out the perfect pieces of clothing to make their scarecrow unique. They hurried back and began stuffing the clothes and their scarecrow started to take shape. The final touches, including a star held in the hand of the scarecrow, were added. At last, their scarecrow was finished and the judges began walking around and looking at each team's creations. Finally, the winners were announced and RuthAnn and her team took first place. The team received their first-place blue ribbon.

The theme of the fair was "Reaching for the Stars" and RuthAnn and her team did just that.

Stuffing the legs of the scarecrow are, from left, Macklan Johnson, Lori Cora and Becky DeWeese. In back stuffing the upper half is RuthAnn Brady.



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Why your VO₂ max matters

Story
Dr. Rob McNab
For Effingham Magazine

A personal prescription for a longer, healthier life



As a 54-year-old who lives with Type 1.5 diabetes, I take my health seriously — but I also want to enjoy life to the fullest.

That's why I train regularly to keep my VO₂ max above 50, which puts me in the top

20% for cardiovascular fitness. For me, this isn't just about numbers — it's about climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, ocean kayaking, hiking through national and state parks, and showing up for my patients, family and adventures with energy and clarity.

You may be wondering: What exactly is VO₂ max?

VO₂ max is a measure of how much oxygen your body can use when you're working hard. It tells us how strong your heart and lungs are — and how well your body can deliver oxygen to your muscles during exercise. The higher your VO₂ max, the more efficient your body is, and the lower your risk of chronic disease, disability and early death.

For years, VO₂ max testing was seen as something only for elite athletes. But new research shows it's one of the most powerful predictors

of health and longevity -- stronger even than cholesterol or blood pressure. In fact, low VO₂ max is a bigger red flag than smoking when it comes to predicting early death.

That's why I believe this simple test should be part of every patient's preventive care. At my clinic, we use it to:

- Evaluate your baseline fitness
- Personalize your exercise prescription
- Track your progress over time
- Catch hidden risks early

The best part? Improving your VO₂ max doesn't require fancy equipment or extreme training. Walking briskly, cycling, hiking, swimming — any activity that gets your heart rate up can help move the needle. And even small increases in VO₂ max can make a big difference in your health.

When your VO₂ max is in a healthy range, you'll:

- Have more energy for everyday life.
- Reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer and dementia.
- Improve your mood, memory and sleep.
- Recover faster from illness or injury.
- Add not just years to your life — but life to your years.

For me, keeping my VO₂ max high helps me manage my diabetes, maintain lean muscle and stay adventurous. Whether I'm at work helping patients reverse chronic disease or out in the world climbing a mountain, that level of fitness is my foundation.

So here's my prescription to you: Know your VO₂ max, and invest in it like your life depends on it — because it truly does. Let's work together to measure it, improve it and celebrate the freedom and vitality that come with it.

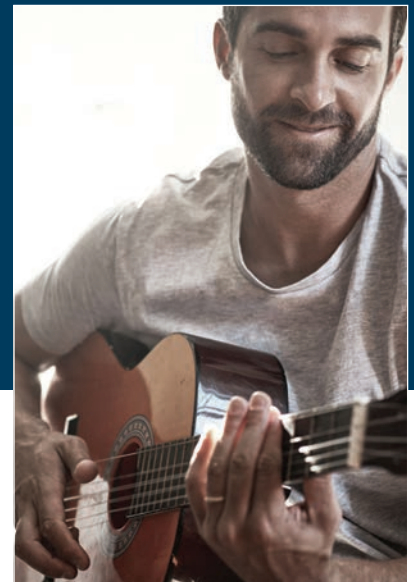
You don't have to train for Everest, but you do deserve the strength and confidence to chase whatever your mountain may be.

Best wishes on your health journey.

Dr. Rob McNab is a board-certified internal medicine and lifestyle medicine physician in Joplin, Missouri, whose columns appear in CNHI publications.



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**HOURS: MONDAY 7:30-5 • TUESDAY - FRIDAY 7:30-5
SATURDAY 7:30-NOON • CLOSED SUNDAY**

Effingham & Area Events



Nov. 13

Friends' Night Out 5-7 p.m. in the Lumpkin Education Center, 1000 Health Center Dr., Mattoon.

Nov. 14

Sarah Bush Lincoln Foundation's Holiday Festival noon-7 p.m. in the Lumpkin Education Center, 1000 Health Center Drive, Mattoon. View the stunning online and live auction items and shop the SBL Gift Shop's Pop-Up Holiday Boutique. Cookies with Claus from 3-7 p.m.

Music Bingo with Heaters 14U Team to raise money to support our 2025-2026 season at Effingham VFW. Doors open 6 p.m. Music bingo at 7 p.m. Silent auction & 50/50. For more info, call Stacy Nelson at 217-821-9572.

Nov. 14-16

Christmas Gift and Craft Show at Cross County Mall in Mattoon.

Nov. 15

Three Dog Night. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

All Hearts Come Home For Christmas Holiday Vendor Fair at Beecher City Kluthe Center in Beecher City. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For

more info contact Ashley Haslett at 618-359-1542 or email Haslettashley43@gmail.com

Pathway of Lights at Aikman Wildlife 4-8 p.m. at 125 N Co Rd 425E, Arcola. Lighted walk-thru display, lighted wagon rides, winter barn tours, Nativity billboard story in drive-thru, Museum of Prehistoric Life, animal encounters.

Nov. 16

A Merry Little Christmas at Pinky's. Free community event! Experience the magic of Pinky's during the holidays! Carriage rides, cookie decorating, face painting/tattoos, make-n-take ornament craft, hot chocolate, s'mores by the fire, bounce house, live animals, live music, treat bags from Santa, vendors, character meet and greets with Santa Claus, the Grinch and Anna & Elsa and much more! Noon-3 p.m. The domes will be heated for dining. The bar will be open with spiked hot chocolates & coffees, holiday beer and other fun Christmas cocktails. Also, join Santa Claus for the boat parade on Lake Sara. Decorate your boat and join in the parade that starts and ends at Pinky's or come watch from land. Bring a new, unwrapped toy to be donated to FISH and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 Pinky's gift card. 8726 E. Marine Road, Effingham.

Christmas Vendor Market at Willow Ridge Winery, 1796 N 1475 East Road, Shelbyville.

Nov. 19

Brad Stine, Christian Comedian 7 p.m. at First Christian Church of Neoga, 190 E. 6th St., Neoga.

Nov. 20

Sarah Bush Lincoln Night of Lights 5-7 p.m. at Sarah Bush Lincoln Heart Center, Entrance H. Bring the whole family to enjoy dazzling light displays, hot chocolate and cookies, and meet friendly therapy dogs, costumed characters and more! Tune your radio to 93.9 while driving through for a holiday play list. The SBL Gift Shop will be open late until 11 p.m. for holiday finds.

Nov. 21

Grapes of Wrath Murder Mystery Dinner 6 p.m. at Tuscan Hills Winery in Effingham. Three-course meal and hilarious night of comedy!

Hairball: A Tribute to Arena Rock. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 8 p.m. theepc.org

Pink Friday in downtown Effingham. Shop small first before the holidays!

Glo Bingo. Not Your grandma's bingo! Doors open 6 p.m. Bingo at 7 p.m. at Effingham Elks to benefit Relay for Life of Effingham County Bosom Buddies Team. Over \$1,000 in cash prizes! Must be 18 or older to attend. Cash bar, 50/50, raffles.

Nov. 22

Michael Cavanaugh Christmas. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Pathway of Lights at Aikman Wildlife 4-8 p.m. at 125 N Co Rd 425E, Arcola. Lighted walk-thru display, lighted wagon rides, winter barn tours, Nativity billboard story in drive-thru, Museum of Prehistoric Life, animal encounters.

Holiday in Herrick 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Herrick Community Building in Herrick. Lunch served 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Poinsettia sale. Food trucks. Santa arrives 10:00 a.m. Pictures with Santa. Multiple craft vendors, 50/50 drawings, lottery board, Herrick Centennial cookbooks for sale. Annual fundraiser for Herrick's 4th of July Celebration.

Nov. 23

Dieterich Women's Club Holiday Artisan & Vendor Market noon-4 p.m. at the Wright Family Center, 205 B South Pine St., Dieterich.

Nov. 26

Walking Through Wonderland: A Visit Effingham Experience. Join us for this magical, family-friendly walk-thru experience 5-8 p.m. Get up close and personal with larger-than-life light displays. Free to public but donations are welcome. Sing along to your favorite Christmas music, visit with Santa Claus and enjoy complimentary refreshments



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fireside. Food and drink available for purchase. Event at Community Park in Effingham.

Thanks Groovin' Eve with Danny Shelton & The Bird Dogs Band 7–10 p.m. at A1 Liquors, Hwy 33, Effingham.

Nov. 28 & 29

E.A.R.S. Tinsel & Tails. Enjoy a golf cart ride and be delighted by spectacular light displays along the golf course at Cardinal Golf Course in Effingham. Sip on hot chocolate, enjoy warm snacks, roast s'mores and make plenty of family fun holiday memories. Friday and Saturday night 5–9 p.m. Benefit for Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary.

Nov. 29

Christmas In A One-Cow Town in Stewardson starting at 3 p.m. This year's lighted parade theme will be Christmas songs. So get cracking, it could be Scrooge, Peanuts, Silent Night, Santa Claus is Coming to Town. This theme will have endless possibilities. All, of course, for cash prizes!!

New things coming along with the most popular activities staying.

- snowball arena
- train ride
- real snowball launch
- adopt a penguin or polar bear
- ornament painting
- make and take gift for Mom and Dad
- reindeer food
- characters
- food trucks
- Santa
- petting zoo
- story time
- merry moomories lanterns
- free hot cocoa
- toy drive
- snow globe
- photo ops
- scavenger hunt
- winter moolympics
- performance by WSS dance team
- Anna and Elsa
- lighted parade at 7 p.m.
- decorated wreath contest
- the BIG cow giveaway
- and two more BIG surprises

Hometown Christmas in downtown Effingham. 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. Lunch with Santa at Joe's Pizza; 3–5 p.m. Santa's Workshop heated tent in city parking lot with crafts, activities and cookie decorating; 3–5 p.m. horse-drawn carriage rides, LIVE reindeer, tractor train rides, Joe Sippers hot chocolate and treats; 5 p.m. lighted Christmas parade starting at Baseball Card Connection to Heart Theatre; 5:45–8 p.m. Santa arrives at his house; 6:15 p.m. FACE Christmas concert at the old courthouse. Be entertained by beloved Christmas and Disney characters. Sip on warm and delightful hot drinks, savor kettle corn and enjoy festive fun!

Herman German Market 8 a.m.–4 p.m., 810 E. Fayette Ave, Effingham. Local vendors and crafts, family-friendly fun, indoor/outdoor booths (weather permitting). Free admission.

Hometown Christmas 1–7 p.m. in Neoga at Kirbside Coffee parking lot.

Downtown Mattoon Cookie Walk

Magic and Mischief: A Winter Witch Market and Enchanted Yule Ball at the Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham. Winter Witch Market noon–7 p.m., free admission. Open to all ages. Explore unique oddity and witch vendors. Live performances and entertainment. Crystals, potions, taxidermy & more! Enchanted Yule Ball (Doors open 5:30 p.m. Ball begins at 6 p.m.) ages 18+ with cash bar, delicious full meal, festive drinks, exciting live performance and DJ music. Enchanted ball attire encouraged. Costumes and trinkets encouraged for both the market and the ball.

Whoville 2025 in the Village of Sainte Marie, IL. 9:30 a.m. shop outdoors (behind the parish) with our local who's as they set up at Whovillage for all your Christmas shopping needs! 10 a.m. let the fun begin as the parish hall opens the doors for children to get pictures with Whoville characters! Whoville store & kids toy raffles (cash only). \$500 raffle sponsored by Sainte Marie State Bank. Affordable food & drinks (cash only), sweet & salty treats, ice skating rink with skate rental, free photo booth, free face painting & crafts (donations welcome at Sainte Marie American Legion upstairs), old-fashioned games, family pics at the Whoville truck (across from church), Sainte Marie Foundation House & Museum tours (10 a.m.–2 p.m.), American Legion food & Whoville vendors and more!!! Public bathrooms at legion, parish, & park. Come one, come all! All ages welcome for this Christmas experience!

Pathway of Lights at Aikman Wildlife 4–8 p.m. at 125 N Co Rd 425E, Arcola. Lighted walk-thru display, lighted wagon rides, winter barn tours, Nativity billboard story in drive-thru, Museum of Prehistoric Life, animal encounters. Pajama Night — wear your favorite holiday pajamas to the park and enjoy the lights!

Nov. 30

All I Want for Christmas Craft & Vendor Show at Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham. 10 a.m. to 4 pm. Free entry. 80+ booths to shop from. Free pictures with Santa! Free entry!

Dec. 4–7

Holiday Fest at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston.

Dec. 5

Downtown Mattoon Celebrate Christmas

Dec. 5 & 6

E.A.R.S. Tinsel & Tails. Enjoy a golf cart ride and be delighted by spectacular light displays along the golf course at Cardinal Golf Course in Effingham. Sip on hot chocolate, enjoy warm snacks, roast s'mores and make plenty of family fun holiday memories. Friday and Saturday night 5–9 p.m. Benefit for Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary.

Candy Canes on Main in downtown Casey. Lighted Christmas Parade, vendor merry market, downtown starlight shopping, stories with Santa, character breakfast, snowball drop, sidewalk vendors, kids inflatables, ice skating, local shopping & more!

Dec. 6

Holiday Vendor Market at West End Event Center in Newton starting at 9 a.m.

Christmas in the 'Burg noon to 8 p.m. in Strasburg Community Park. A brand-new festive celebration for the whole community! Enjoy a day full of holiday cheer with Santa's Woodshop (meet Santa and create memorable keepsakes), delicious food vendors with seasonal favorites, DJ to dance and sing along to your favorite holiday tunes, and Sojourn Rocs Band will play from 5–8 p.m. with live music and so much more for the whole family!

Olde Fashioned Downtown Christmas 9 a.m.–1 p.m. in downtown Shelbyville.



Windsor Wonderland. This year's theme is Candyland. Free event. Live reindeer, Santa visits, hot chocolate, chili and hot dog meal, games and activities, all in downtown Windsor. 5-7 p.m.

Who Brought the Humbug? Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Dec. 6

Christmas in the Village 5:45-8 p.m. at Teutopolis Grade School. Santa will be escorted by the fire dept approx. 5:45 p.m. and be at the Teutopolis Grade School Gym from 6-8 p.m. Hot chocolate, water, hotdogs, Christmas music, coloring sheets and ornaments for kids to decorate, write letters to Santa, and more! Donations for the event can be deposited into the Christmas in the Village account at Teutopolis State Bank.

Indigo Children Christmas Show 7 p.m. at Village Wine, downtown Effingham.

Pathway of Lights at Aikman Wildlife 4-8 p.m. at 125 N Co Rd 425E, Arcola. Lighted walk-thru display, lighted wagon rides, winter barn tours, Nativity billboard story in drive-thru, Museum of Prehistoric Life, animal encounters. Pajama Night — wear your favorite holiday pajamas to the park and enjoy the lights!

Dec. 7

Small Town Christmas in Dieterich at Liberty Park from 2-5 p.m.

Old Fashioned Christmas on the Prairie at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site. Light refreshments, children's craft stations, horse and carriage rides. East Central Chorale leads carols in auditorium at 1 p.m. Gift shop with unique locally sourced products and handcrafted items.

Lonestar & Collin Raye Christmas. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Dec. 12 & 13

E.A.R.S. Tinsel & Tails. Enjoy a golf cart ride and be delighted by spectacular light displays along the golf course at Cardinal Golf Course in Effingham. Sip on hot chocolate, enjoy warm snacks, roast s'mores and make plenty of family fun holiday memories. Friday and Saturday night 5-9 p.m. Benefit for Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary.

Christmas Store / Cookie Walk at the Community Center in Strasburg. Santa comes to the Community Center in Strasburg from 9:30-11 a.m. on Dec. 13.

Dec. 12

Texas Tenors Christmas. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Dec. 13

Polar Express Interactive Movie. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 3 p.m. theepc.org

Christmas on the Square in Newton. Lots of activities planned throughout the day including kids' activities, Mistletoe Market, a food truck garden and a lighted parade at 6 p.m.

Pathway of Lights at Aikman Wildlife 4-8 p.m. at 125 N Co Rd 425E, Arcola. Lighted walk-thru display, lighted wagon rides, winter barn tours, Nativity billboard story in drive-thru, museum of prehistoric life, animal encounters. Santa Night — Santa & Mrs. Claus will be in our loft ready to take pictures with guests.

Dec. 14

Lutheran Churches Christmas Cantata 7 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church in Strasburg.

Dec. 19 & 20

E.A.R.S. Tinsel & Tails. Enjoy a golf cart ride and be delighted by spectacular light displays along the golf course at Cardinal Golf Course in Effingham. Sip on hot chocolate, enjoy warm snacks, roast s'mores and make plenty of family fun holiday memories. Friday and Saturday night 5-9 p.m. Benefit for Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary.

Dec. 19

Jingle Bell Jam. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Dec. 20

Stocking Stuffer Saturday in downtown Effingham. Downtown stores have great stocking stuffer offers!

Santa Stomp. Celebrate the Holidays with a fun, festive run or walk through Teutopolis! Awards given at race completion. After the run there will be food in the Teutopolis Banquet Hall. For more info contact Kristi Sabo at 217-273-5695. Proceeds to benefit Land of Lincoln Honor Flight. Follow us on Facebook at Santa Stomp 5K Run/Walk for updates.

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8 DEC



HOLIDAY LIGHTS + FESTIVE SIGHTS TOUR

Be a stop on our 2nd
annual Holiday Lights Tour!

Entries are due **Dec. 8th**;
only 20 entrants will be
selected!

The tour will run from
Dec. 12th - 30th, and one
lucky home will win the
"People's Choice" award.

Light Up The Lawn

Visit our larger-than-life,
3D Holiday Light displays
in Downtown Effingham,
on the Courthouse lawn
through the New Year.



There's No Place Like Home For the Holidays...



26 NOV

WALKING THROUGH WONDERLAND

For one night only, from 5 to 8 p.m., Wonderland in Lights,
a drive-thru light display in Community Park, will be closed to all vehicles
for an enchanting evening stroll through the lights.

Join Visit Effingham, as we present an evening filled with joyful music, festive fare,
holiday characters and souvenirs... and lots of Christmas magic, of course!

WONDERLAND IN LIGHTS

will open to vehicles for the season
on Friday, November 28th.

The drive-thru display is open
Sunday - Thursday, 5 to 9 p.m., and
Friday & Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m.



Christmas with Elvis featuring Scott Wattles. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Dec. 22

Scrooge Day in downtown Effingham. Last-minute shopping ideas from your downtown Effingham businesses!

Dec. 26 & 27

E.A.R.S. Tinsel & Tails. Enjoy a golf cart ride and be delighted by spectacular light displays along the golf course at Cardinal Golf Course in Effingham. Sip on hot chocolate, enjoy warm snacks, roast s'mores and make plenty of family fun holiday memories. Friday and Saturday night 5–9 p.m. Benefit for Effingham Animal Rescue Sanctuary.

2026

Jan. 17

Frozen Interactive Movie. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 3 p.m. theepc.org

Effingham County Chamber Annual Gala "Saturday Night Fever" Citizen of the Year, Volunteer of the Year, Businesses of the Year and more awards to be announced! Event at the Thelma Keller Convention Center in Effingham.

Jan. 23

Matt Dusk Sings SINATRA. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Jan. 24

John Crist Live. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Lifeless in Seattle Murder Mystery Dinner at the Newton American Legion 6 p.m. Every

ticket purchased enters you in a drawing for a one-night stay and a \$100 dinner gift certificate to the Terre Haute Casino Resort.

Jan. 30

Chris Janson. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Jan. 31

Rodney Carrington Live 2026. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 6

Hee Haw Honey Reunion. Featuring the Original Stars of Hee Haw: Misty Rowe, Jeff Smith and Tammy Stephens Smith. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 7

Mike Super 2.OH! Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 12

Aaron Lewis. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 14

Direct from Sweden: The Music of ABBA. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 20

Dinosaur World Live. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 21

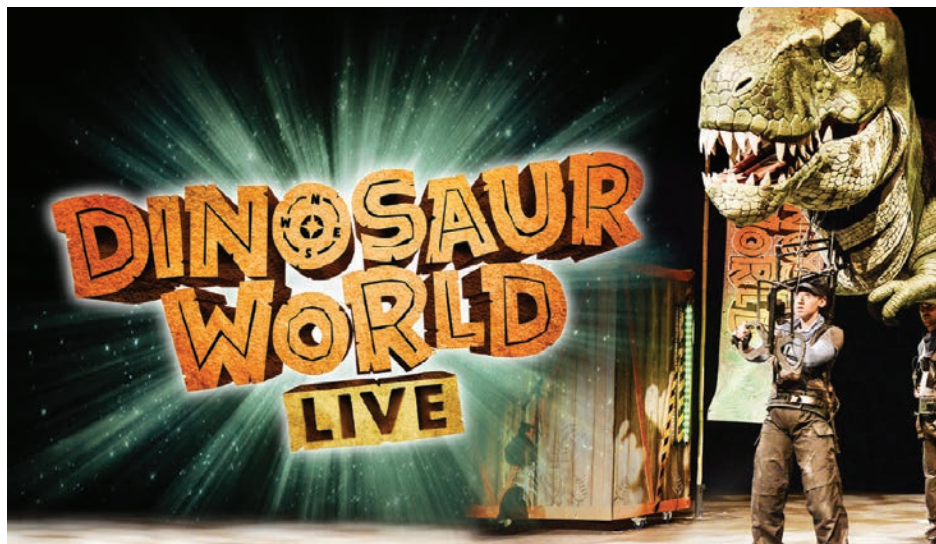
Floyd Nation Celebrating Pink Floyd. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 26

Dr. Reed Timmer, America's Most Famous Storm Chaser. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Feb. 27

The Barricade Boys Broadway Party. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org



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Feb. 28

Six String Summit. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

Effingham Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Plunge at Lake Sara to benefit Special Olympics Illinois.

March 6

Celebrating Meat Loaf. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

March 12

Vitamin String Quartet. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

March 13

Pauly Shore Stand Up Comedy. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

March 21

Mama I'm A Big Girl Now! Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Broadway Musical "Hairspray." Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

March 27

The Traveling Salvation Show: A Tribute to Neil Diamond. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

March 28

Fake News: A Tribute to Huey Lewis. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

April 25

Clay Walker. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 7 p.m. theepc.org

May 28-30

Neoga Days in Neoga with theme Sweet Summertime.

May 29

Henry Cho – The Empty Nest Tour. Tickets online now! Effingham Performance Center 8 p.m.

August 7-9

Tropic-Van-A presented by Central Illinois Truckin Association at Spring Creek Campground in Montrose. Live music, vanner shenanigans, shot bar, beer truck and more!

Sept. 5

The Kramers 6 p.m. at Mullen Baptist Church, 675 150N, Montrose. For more info: 217-254-0905.

Sept. 11 & 12

Downtown Effingham Cruise

Have an event you want to promote? Send to jody.hardiek@effinghamdailynews.com



Muscle cars line Fourth Street in Effingham during Cruise Night in 2024. Effingham Daily News file photo



THERE'S MONEY IN YOUR HOME

Home Equity Line of Credit (HELOC)

Use your funds for home improvements, debt consolidation, education expenses, or even a well-earned vacation!



Contact one of our hometown lenders to see how the equity in your home can work for you.
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Early



Walk-In Mammography

No Appointment Necessary

Most insurance companies cover one screening mammography a year.

Nearly one in eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, and it's the second leading cause of cancer death in women next to lung cancer.

Cancer can't always be felt.

Mammograms can find breast cancer long before you or your doctor would be able to feel a lump in your breast. Mammograms can see changes to your breast tissue as small as a grain of sand.

Twenty minutes of your time.

It may not be the most comfortable procedure, but a mammogram only takes about 20 minutes, and could give you more lifetime to spend with those you love.

The American Cancer Society recommends breast cancer screening with mammograms around age 40 and continued yearly.



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