

A Kid's Christmas

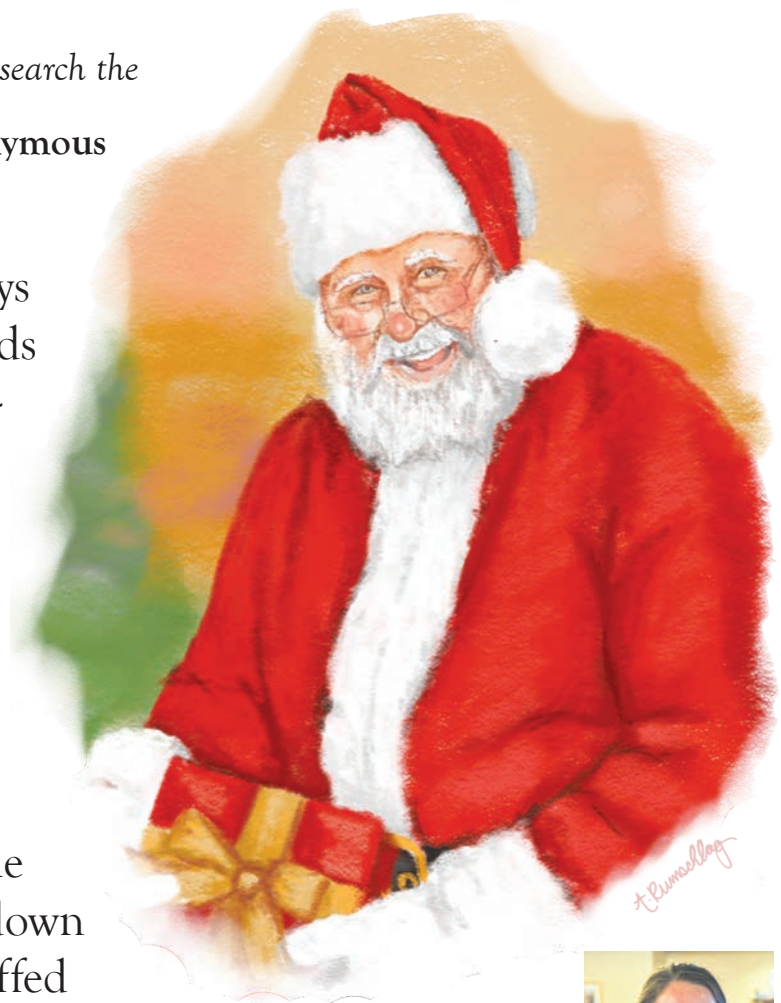
by Larry Harris, CEO

*May you never be too grown up to search the
skies on Christmas Eve.*

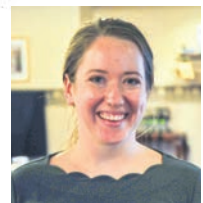
Anonymous

I never really believed in Santa Claus. Oh, I always wanted to. I did. My friends believed, but from the get-go, Mom told me and my sister and brother the unwelcome truth that Santa wasn't real. He didn't fly around in a deer-drawn sleigh on Christmas Eve, delivering presents to kids all over the world; he didn't squeeze down chimneys with an over-stuffed bag of elf-crafted toys; and he for sure didn't live at the

continued on page 2



*Illustrations for Larry's Christmas essay
and "A Cat's Christmas" short story
on page 6 are by Adrienne Rumschlag,
Village activities director.*



North Pole. Nobody could live at the North Pole. Think about it kids. It's freezing cold up there all the time.

Mom didn't want us to one day figure out – as we surely were bound to do – that she had intentionally misled us, fearing we might surmise the same about a baby from Bethlehem she also had told us about. She said it was fun to make believe, but sorry kids, Santa was not real. So Santa Claus is not coming to town this year, or ever.

Well, there you have it. No Santa. After all these years, I'm still trying to figure if she made the right decision.

Since I've grown up, I have tried hard to nurture a worldview rooted in facts. Give me science, inform me with truth, put a hex on those lame conspiracy theories maliciously peddled to the masses. But little kids? Maybe there is a case for a bit of fantasy when it comes to Christmas.

Sometimes my brother, Rob, and I pretended to believe. On a long-ago Christmas Eve in the 1950s, when I was five and he was seven, we lay awake in our beds in the dormer bedroom we shared at our home in Kansas City. There was no sleep about us, it being Christmas Eve and all. Lying there in the dark with a shy Christmas moon visiting through the window, offering just enough light for Santa and his harnessed team to make their appointed rounds, Rob almost convinced me that he heard reindeer pawing on the roof above us. Listen hard. Don't you hear them too? Santa's delivering our presents right now!

A kid's Christmas is simple and transparent, and leavened with innocent wonder, even when the kid knows the jolly elf in red is nothing but an invention of imagination. There comes a time when we quit Santa and his reindeer and all that – even if you were a firm believer at age five – and embrace a more sober Christmas narrative. As you come of age, you begin to see that our world is steeped in evil, evil you were

shielded from in youth, evil we lather upon each other in our wars and injustices and selfish ambitions, with all manner of meanness available to us. You come to see that ours is a broken world, and each of us is a cracked vessel, imperfect and flawed, with a capacity for malice.

Christmas speaks the truth about evil in our midst. It doesn't turn from our unholy inclinations and pretend we are righteous. No. The Christmas story tells us the truth, then extends a hand of redemption from our dishonorable ways, bringing good news of hope. Thank God. After all, a life without hope would not be worth living.

Christmas tells us that we are not destined to

wander forever in the dark, that we can be plucked from the deepest valley of despair and delivered to a pure new light.

So, is Christmas cause for celebration? For sure. But there is overshadowing tragedy in the Christmas story, which hardly calls for decking the halls or fa-la-la-ing. The newborn baby of Bethlehem was tenderly bundled by his mother and laid in a manger made dark by the long shadow of a cross, his cross, the one he would die upon in just 33 short years.

Christmas for Janet and me is not a time to don our gay apparel and jingle our bells. *Here Comes Santa Claus* and *Up on the Housetop* won't be found on our Pandora playlist. No. Christmas for us is the most holy of days, when we quietly contemplate the gift God gave us 2,000 years ago.

So kids, enjoy your Santa Claus while you can. All too soon you will learn the truth about our world. It is then that I invite you to gather around the Bethlehem manger, gaze in awesome wonder at the child sleeping there, then set off on a life-long journey to follow his trail of tears to the cross.

Larry Harris, CEO
lharris@willow-brook.org



The Order of the Rising Sun



Phil Barth with his medal and patent of decoration signed by the Japanese emperor.

Congratulations to longtime Willow Brook board member and former board president Phil Barth, on his recent recognition by the Japanese government as the recipient of The Order of the Rising Sun decoration. This medal is awarded by the Japanese government to those who have made distinguished achievements in promoting exchanges and friendship between Japan and the United States. The award is a high honor and means a great deal to Barth. “It represents a very humbling recognition by the Japanese government of my personal efforts to help bring two cultures together, enriching the lives of Japanese citizens making their home in Ohio, as well as U.S. citizens having an interest in Japan,” he says.

Barth traveled to Japan for the first time in 1973 and since then has returned somewhere between 40 and 45 times. From 2008-2013, he served as the Honorary Consul General of Japan in Ohio, an office appointed to protect the welfare of local Japanese residents and promote cultural exchange. The Japanese culture has truly impacted his life. “What I learned and have continued to learn has had a very strong influence on my life.”



Nanci McCorkle, daughter of Mae McCorkle, expresses her gratitude to Larry Harris at the gazebo dedication.

Gift of a Gazebo

A gazebo at Willow Brook Christian Village was destroyed last year in a freak car accident (long story). We did not intend to rebuild it, but Mae McCorkle, a resident of the Village Cherith Care Center at the time, would have none of that. She stepped forward with a donation to cover the cost. The project was completed recently. Sadly, Mae died last spring before she could see her rebuilt gazebo. Above, Mae's daughter, Nanci McCorkle, expresses her gratitude to Willow Brook's CEO, Larry Harris, at a ceremony on November 2 when the structure was dedicated in her mother's memory.



Theresa Agyepong (left) and Elizabeth Folefac (right) review The Home's visitation policy.

New Roles at The Home

We are pleased to announce that after eight years of serving as the assistant director of nursing, Theresa Agyepong, RN, has stepped into the director of nursing role at Willow Brook Christian Home. Her colleague Elizabeth Folefac has moved into Theresa's former assistant role, and together, they are a mighty force. Our residents at the Home are in outstanding hands under the guidance of these seasoned professionals and longtime Willow Brookers. Thank you, ladies, for your dedication to your residents and your team, in good times and in challenging times. We appreciate you both so much.

Tribute Gifts

Memorial Contributions September 23 – November 21, 2021

Charles D. Allen

Grace M. Lang

Robert Allman

Uleta M. Allman

Richard C. Atkinson

Carol A. Roden

Betty H. Baker

Dennis & Katherine Mills

Helen C. Baker

Frank & Deanna Shirley

S. Lucille Barkley

Larry & Carol Gillespie

Judy Bear

Dan Bear

John & Jo Ann Bill

Brent & Nancy Bill

Linda Bill

Dave & Julie Duff

Hazel B. Blose

R. Dennis & Sharon Blose

Gretna Bohl

Milton & Helen Critchfield

William & Catherine Denk

John & Sue Dickman

Bill & L. Ellen Griffith

Ursula Guerrieri

Emily Hinton

James & Pauline Kossow

Jean Luning-Johnson

Herbert Magley

John & Joyce Perl

Beverly Seitz

Steve & Mary Weber

Don & Melissa Young

Karen Young

Harriet M. Bracken

C. Lee Bracken

Margery D. Burkhart

David & Carol Camp

Paul Busche

Janet Busche

Frances Carlton

April L. Jackson

S. Frank & Betty Chappell

Larry & Janet Harris

Karen Susenna

William & Phyllis Croll

Carolyn Croll-Johnston &

Robert Johnston

Virginia "Nadine" Davis

Timothy & Janice Lovat

Robert Schultz

James "Richard" Dawson

Chris & Penny Matthewson

Nancy DeTray

Lisa Mack

Harry & Dora Devers

Diana Pereira

Curtis Dunham

Melissa Ashley

Judith "Judy" Ebling

Robert Ebling

Barbara England's birthday

Michael & Judith England

Ed & Jean Flahive

Michael & Judith England

Betty Godbold

Daniel Call & Gerry Whinnery

Neil Gouhin

Cynthia J. Crecelius

Betty Griffith

Gary & Sherrie Andrus

Audrey & Alberta Harris

Larry & Janet Harris

John T. Hayes

Karen S. Hayes

James E. Jackson

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

James R. & Shirley Jackson

C. Lee Bracken

Kent & Lauren Eastham

Johanna "Joedy" Jenkins

Joyce Barker

Thomas J. Lasley

Thomas & Janet Lasley

Charlotte Luedemann

Ronald & Laura Scharer

Edith MacBlane

Richard & Nancy Scarci

Elsa McLoughlin

Grace M. Lang

Robert McLoughlin

Richard F. Seebode

Robert McLoughlin

Glenn & Sara Beaber

Lois Dale

Robert McLoughlin continued

John & Sue Dickman

Richard F. Seebode

Nancy D. Woodman

Betty J. Miller

Larry & Carol Gillespie

George Mirka

Judy Mirka

Raymond E. Nally

Frederick & Gayle Reidenbach

Wanda O'Rourke

Helen J. Reppart

Edmund "Ned" Paca

Mariella C. Dunnann

Corinne D. Esau

Helen Sferra

Lucretia M. Wellman

Florence Poulson

Thomas & Sara Poulson

Gene & Emma "Maude" Prince

Larry & Janet Harris

Rebecca L. Harris

John R. & Mary Ellen Regalsky

Lois Dale

Thomas & LaVonne Moore

Pedro & Judith Obregon

William Reidenbach

Frederick & Gayle Reidenbach

Lucille Reinhard

Fred & Betty Worley

Mary C. Roden

Carol A. Roden

Don Rost

Thomas & Sara Poulson

Lynne Shively

Shirley Brush

Carol Casey

Mariella C. Dunnann

Corinne D. Esau

Douglas & Elaine Palmer

Helen J. Reppart

Martha J. Seelenbinder

Helen Sferra

Sarah Smith

Lynne Shively continued

Donald & Amy Jo Sommers

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Lucretia M. Wellman

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Melody Sweet

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Uleta M. Allman

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Corrine Snyder-Poulson

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Mary F. Tipton

Jerry & Cathy Amato

Betty Weber

David & Patricia Seibert

Olga Werley

Carol Hill

Dorothea Wiget

Craig Wiget

David Wiget

Max Wildermuth

Jayne W. MacKay

Robert Williams

Corinne D. Esau

Dale E. Wilson

Uleta M. Allman

Phyllis Wood

C. Lee Bracken

Virginia M. Wuertz

Grace M. Lang

Nicki V. Zanetos

Lisa Mack

Tribute Gifts To honor the living

Joseph & Karen Borst

Elizabeth Mankowski

James Coulter & Joyce Wells

Elizabeth Bedinghaus

Audrey Jo Eastham

Kent & Lauren Eastham

Corinne D. "Davie" Esau

Michael & Judith England

Dorothy "Dottie" Knight

Elizabeth Bedinghaus

Pioneer Christmas Memories

by Brynn McGrail

An unforgettable childhood Christmas for Coe Huckabee was one she calls her “pioneer Christmas.” It was 1946, after World War II had ended. There were no new houses built during the war for Coe’s family to move into when her father was transferred to Denver for his job, so the family had settled in a log cabin at the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

“We had heavy snowfall and we had to shovel snow off the roof of the house and garage so the weight of it wouldn’t collapse the house,” Coe said. “The wind whistled between the round logs so we had to stuff newspapers, old rags, and socks to try to keep out the draft.”

Her family grew closer, playing games together, sledding in the mountains,

and learning to use a wood stove. They even cut pieces of ice from the creek for their ice box!

Christmas morning, “Santa found us, and I know it was Santa because we put out hot chocolate and a cookie, and when we woke up the next morning, both were gone!” she said. Coe remembers her and her brother’s Christmas morning routine, drinking orange juice before getting into the candies in their stockings, and using their nutcracker.

That childhood Christmas excitement is very familiar to Coe, who has vivid memories of watching a bright star on a tower outside her bedroom waiting for Christmas morning to finally arrive. “I don’t think I slept that entire night,” Coe said. “I kept getting up and looking at that star against the sky to see if it was getting lighter out.”

“It’s such a wonderful excitement, that childhood Christmas.”



Colleen “Coe” Huckabee, resident at The Village.



Brynn McGrail is a server in the Courtyard Restaurant at Willow Brook Christian Village. This is an excerpt from a story she wrote for a school project.



Home resident Elfrieda “Elfie” Carr poses for her Christmas spotlight.



Kristy King, housekeeping director, and resident Karma Weurtz decorate a Christmas tree at Delaware Run.



Winter wonderland at The Village.

Christmas at Willow Brook

Tinsel sparkled on the tree. The firelight illuminated it in a way that made it deliciously tempting. Mosley slowly lowered himself into a crouch, never once taking his eyes off the nearest clump.

"Oh, no, you don't!"

Mosley let out a cry as Sandie swept him into her arms.

"Naughty cat," she told him, cradling him like a baby as she walked away from the fancy evergreen tree. "You know you're not supposed to play with the tree. What do you have to say for yourself?"

Mosley began purring.

As she laughed, he snuggled into her hold. For whatever reason, his human didn't laugh as much as she used to. He supposed it had something to do with the absence of the two older humans who used to stop by. They had looked remarkably similar to his Sandie, and both of them had stopped visiting her a few winters ago around this time of year. He gathered there had been something called a "car crash."

Whatever the reason, his Sandie did not laugh very often. It was a shame; he rather enjoyed her laugh.

Humans, his included, liked to give each other gifts this time of winter. Perhaps he would try to give Sandie the gift of laughter. How would a cat go about giving his human some laughter?

Over the next few days, Mosley attempted a variety of tricks designed to make Sandie laugh. He fell off the fireplace—yes, it had been on purpose—he stole her socks, he chased his tail, and he ran into the glass door—also on purpose. The time he ran into the glass door actually did make her laugh, but Mosley wasn't satisfied.

He wanted her to laugh so hard that her eyes would begin leaking and she couldn't make it to her litter box in time. He wanted her to laugh so hard that all her worries fell away. He wanted her to laugh so hard that she could forget the pain of the past, that she could

learn to keep on laughing despite the bad things that happened to her.

So what did humans find funny? He didn't think she would appreciate the terrified squeaks of a mouse

as much as he did, or even the punishments the neighbor gave to his misbehaving dog. How

could he find or do something that would make her laugh hard enough?

Suddenly, he knew exactly what to do. He swished his tail in delight.

Mosley waited beneath the evergreen tree with a fancy knot—humans called it a "bow"—atop his head. It took everything within his willpower not to shake it from his head. It took an equal amount of willpower to keep himself from purring. His idea was genius! There was no way Sandie would be able to keep herself from laughing.

The ceiling light turned on. Footsteps sounded from down the hall. Mosley stilled his fidgeting. Show time.

As Sandie approached the tinsel-adorned tree in her coziest clothes, Mosley meowed as pitifully as he could. Sandie looked down, and, when she saw him, covered her mouth with her hands. Was she amused? Was she smiling? Was she about to burst into a fit of laughter?

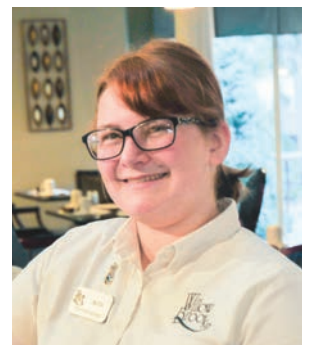
"Oh, Mosley," she whispered. She crouched down and gently drew him out from under the tree, her eyes red and wet. "You crafty cat. You just made my day. Merry Christmas." Well, it wasn't laughter, but he supposed it would do. Mosley purred and snuggled into Sandie's hold.

A Cat's Christmas

By Becca Camp



The story's author, Becca Camp, age 18, is winner of our first Christmas short story writing contest. She is a server in the Courtyard Restaurant at The Village.



Gift of Love Award Winners

Every year, the Gift of Love Award is presented to volunteers who contribute their time and talent to enrich the lives of Willow Brook residents and staff. Volunteers serve in many ways, but no matter what they do, they do it out of the goodness of their heart and with no financial

reward. We are honored to present to you the Gift of Love Award recipients from each of our three campuses. These outstanding individuals exemplify the spirit of unselfish giving. Their contributions mean the world to us, and we are delighted to share them with you.



Joe Fiala
THE HOME



Ellie Heingartner
THE VILLAGE



Norm and Lela Weston
DELAWARE RUN

Lora Detlor, activities director at Willow Brook Christian Home, shares the following: "Joe comes every week to The Home to see all of the Catholic residents and to bring them communion. During COVID Joe put together a devotion and prayer each week and FaceTimed with the residents. Joe works hard to make sure the spiritual needs of our Catholic residents are met."

Connie McNeal, activities director at Willow Brook Christian Village, shares the following: "Ellie shares her happy energy with everyone around her. She also gives of her time and talent, helping other residents create paintings and artwork of their own. She is a companion to many, always ready to step in and help wherever needed."

Delaware Run resident Irene Blaszkowiak, says, "This duo has so enriched all of us for years. Norm with his audio/video expertise, serving/leading the Resident's Association, and giving us our yearly dose of operettas. Lela for all her work with Touching Little Lives, leading the sewing/quilting group, giving lessons in stained glass art, and organizing the cookie walk to benefit People in Need."

Willow Brook Christian Home

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Columbus, Ohio 43235
Phone: (614) 885-3300

Willow Brook Christian Village

100 Willow Brook Way South
Delaware, Ohio 43015
Phone: (740) 369-0048

Willow Brook at Delaware Run

100 Delaware Crossing West
Delaware, Ohio 43015
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Silent Night at Delaware Run



Photo by resident Rayna Patton