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M A G A Z I N E

DECEMBER 2023

## Vintage Christmas

At Home With Jimmy  
and Kimberly Case

2023 Holiday  
Shopping Guide

Also inside:  
Scavenger Hunt

In the Kitchen With  
Merisa Ballansaw

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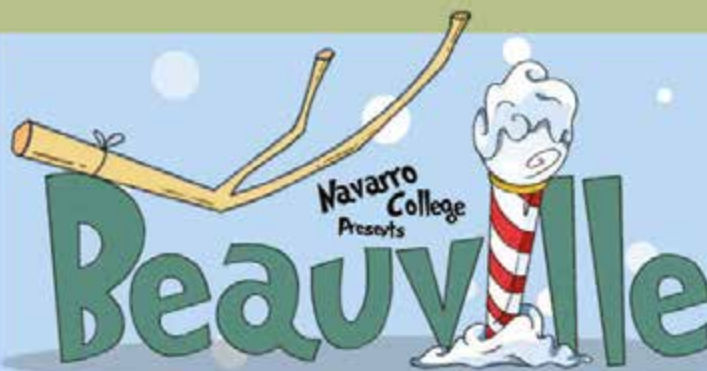


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# Happy Holidays!

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### Winter Dates



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Dec. 2 – Christmas in Red Oak Event  
Dec. 14 – North Texas Food Bank  
Dec. 18 – ROISD School Board Meeting  
Dec. 20 - Jan. 3 – Winter Break  
January – School Board Appreciation Month  
Jan. 4-5 – Staff Development Days  
Jan. 8 – Classes Resume (Spring Semester)  
Jan. 10 – Superintendent Coffee Talk  
Jan. 15 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
(District Closed)  
Jan. 22 – ROISD School Board Meeting  
Feb. 2 – District Holiday

Details at RedOakISD.org

ON THE COVER



Jimmy and Kimberly Case fill the holidays with special activities, culminating in their vintage-filled home.

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Angel

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

To this day ...

It's interesting how we can become so set in tradition, we believe our ways have always been the same. While decorating trees and exchanging gifts are activities that have been synonymous with Christmas for generations, these observances toward the Savior's birth were long in the making. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes, in fact, that there was opposition to recognizing Jesus' birth during the first two centuries of Christianity. Church leaders preferred honoring saints and martyrs on the day of their martyrdom, not the date they were born.

So, how did we come to celebrate Jesus' birth on December 25? That tradition is generally explained as a date chosen by the Roman Empire when the winter solstice marked the rebirth of sunny days. An alternate explanation calculated the creation of the world on the spring equinox, followed by the creation of light — or the day of Jesus' conception — four days later on March 25. Nine months after, then, Jesus would have been born around December 25.

In the 9th century, Christmas became increasingly celebrated, including midnight mass and candlelight services on December 24. Gift exchanges are dated to the 15th century (but not widely popular until the end of the 18th century) and Christmas trees to the 1600s. The Advent calendar and sharing of Christmas cards are attributed to the 19th century. Today, mailing cards is giving way to social media posts, and the exchanging of gifts is increasingly trending toward shared experiences. May your traditions — old or new — still serve to remind you of the reason behind the season.

O, holy night!

P.S. The publisher and staff of NOW Magazines would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of holiday seasons!

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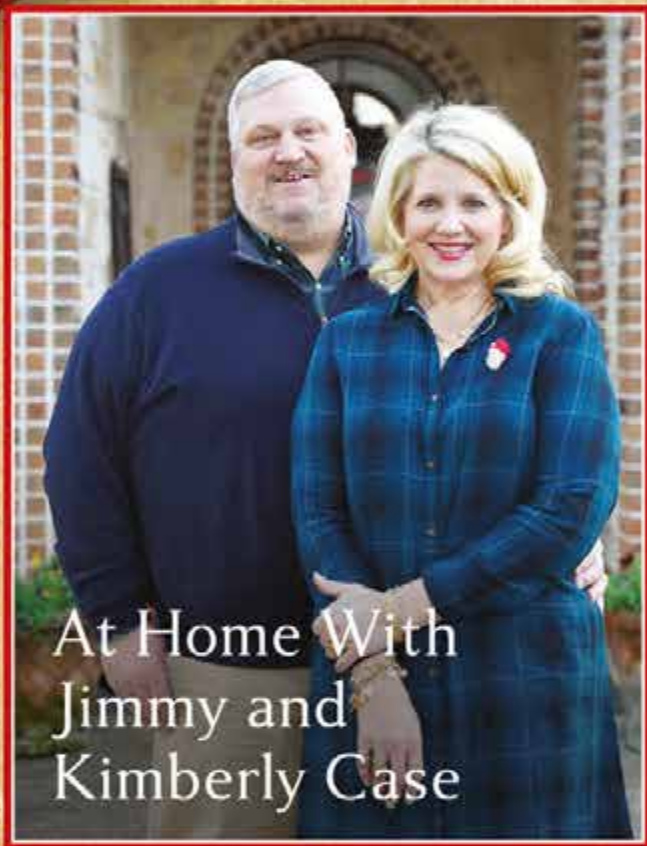
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# Vintage Christmas



At Home With  
Jimmy and  
Kimberly Case

*An admiration for antiques is showcased year-round in the home of Jimmy and Kimberly Case, but never more so than at Christmas. “What started my love of vintage things was a nativity my grandmother painted in 1962 that she gave me,” Kimberly reflected. “Today, it’s the center of my nativity collection, which numbers probably 50 plus.”*



The Cases collected nativities from their travels to such places as Belize, Costa Rica, England, France, Germany, Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico, even the Vatican. “We got a nativity on our honeymoon to give to Jimmy’s grandparents, and when they passed, we inherited it back. On a mission trip, we got a large one of clay,” Kimberly explained. “It was neat to see how the nativity was depicted in different places. Now our dining room is the nativity room, even with a nativity tree.”

Having grown up in Duncanville (Jimmy) and Oak Cliff (Kimberly), the couple put down roots in Ovilla as they started their family — which now totals three adult daughters, one son-in-law, two grandchildren and a son-in-law to be. They built their Ashburne Glenn home in 2001, and their careers in the restaurant industry and field of education. Jimmy is general manager for Campuzano Mexican Foods, and Kimberly taught middle school for a decade before serving in an administrative job at Dallas Baptist University for seven years. Today, Kimberly is president of her homeowners association, a member of the service league and was elected to Ovilla City Council Place 1 last year, where she now serves as mayor pro tem. She’s also an antiques dealer.

“My antiques booth at With Willing Hands in Waxahachie has been so much fun. I’ve always been a collector, but now

# as

— By Angel Morris



I'm a collector with a purpose," Kimberly admitted. "I put tags on my items with ideas of how to use them — like making an old thermos a flower vase, or a cookie jar missing its lid into a mini Christmas tree holder. I hate to see things thrown out that can be repurposed."

Each room of the Case home has its own purpose, with a specific theme. "One room features a tree of photo ornaments of all our family members taken during Christmases through the years," Jimmy described. "And the vintage glass ornaments on that tree belonged to my grandparents."

"Primitive Christmas" is the theme of the guest bedroom. "I love folk-art style. I try to buy handmade because I appreciate the work that goes into that," Kimberly noted. "My blue-and-white room features 1980s-style ornaments — like ceramic ducks, cats, deer. That's the Blue Christmas space."

The media room is western-themed with vintage Peanuts in the mix. "I love

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ornaments, one features ornaments from their own childhood and one, of course, the ornaments made by their daughters. “We even have an ornament that plays a recording of each of the girls’ voices. Miraculously, those still work,” Jimmy said.

It takes Kimberly about a week to get every room decorated, beginning the weekend after Thanksgiving. “Jimmy helps by getting the boxes out and putting up the trees. Then he goes hunting for the week,” Kimberly laughed.

The main area of the house showcases a vintage Santa collection, from figurines to mugs; vintage tins and miniature deer painted by Kimberly; the home’s largest tree; and more. “For years, we would go out to choose a live tree. Then the lots started to disappear. But we still do the big tree as a family,” Jimmy noted. “We typically have a week of activities planned, like our annual gingerbread house contest and an evening where we host friends for tamales and a cup of cider.”

The home’s exterior is not neglected, with red-and-white lights on the roofline and along the sidewalk, and a



vintage blow mold nativity scene. “Jimmy puts it in the backyard. It reflects beautifully in the water of the pool,” Kimberly described.

One would have to see it to truly appreciate the work Kimberly puts into displaying their hundreds of vintage pieces. “We’re really intentional about our December, or it is just a blur. It’s amazing how quickly Kimberly knocks things out. Then we have an activity schedule, so everyone knows what to expect,” Jimmy said.

And at the Case home, one can expect vintage Christmas to come to life. “That’s what I love about the season,” Kimberly stated. “It reminds us of family and of home. You can look at each thing and reflect on special memories and traditions.” **NOW**

all things Texas and even decorate for Texas Independence Day. The State Fair is a big tradition for our family, too,” Kimberly, who has won several ribbons in fair competitions, said. “One of our daughters loved Snoopy, so she started a collection, and it will be hers when she wants it.”

The grandchildren’s room — with vintage Fisher Price toys and the crib their daughters slept in — features a tree of ornaments Kimberly made from Little Golden Books illustrations. “I like to make things. I used to scrapbook. I turned a closet into storage for all the scrapbooks I’ve made through the years.”

Of their 19 various-sized Christmas trees, one showcases baking-themed

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A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.

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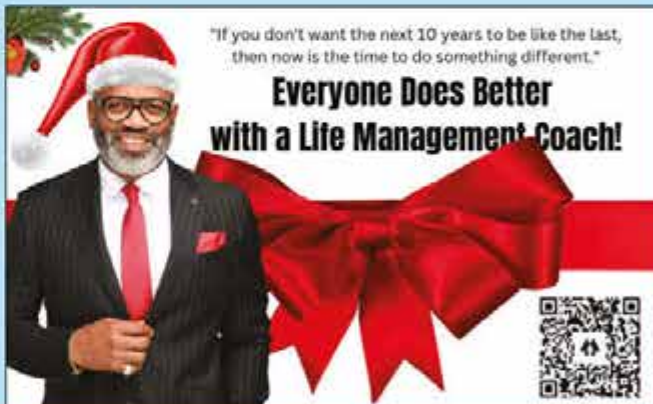
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## Zoomed In: Arielle Holmes

By Angel Morris

Life High School Waxahachie Principal Freddie Stanmore recently recognized Glenn Heights resident Arielle Holmes for being awarded the prestigious 2023 National African American Recognition Award by the College Board. NAARA is awarded to African American students across the U.S. who excel academically and contribute to their communities.

An LHS senior, Arielle was selected out of 72,000 applicants. "I believe that this award is not only an impressive milestone, but the fruits of my hard work over the years coming full circle," she noted. "I am grateful for the support of those who have brought me this far, and I hope to continue surpassing milestones and exceeding expectations."



Ronald Grogan, senior patrol leader for Red Oak Scout Troop 652, collects donations for the St. Vincent de Paul holiday meal basket program.



Red Oak's Keyiona Cobb joins Ivette Rodriguez in helping the group, Care, fight poverty and hunger.



Glenn Heights Fire Department commends firefighters and paramedics Seth Reece, Chris Romero, Honore Britton, John Chapman and Jason Cates, who successfully delivered a baby en route to the hospital.



Ovilla Christian School's Emma Rhodes earns fourth in cross-country at the 2023 TAPPS State Championships.



St. Nick is the guest of honor at the ROHS Special Needs Market.



Ruth Gibson brings her pet to St. Paul Church Ellis County's 2023 Blessing of the Animals with Father Terry Reisner.



Fifth-grader James Boynton is awarded for his Big Bad Wolf design in Eastridge Elementary's The Great Pumpkin decorating contest.



## North Ellis Co. NOW Scavenger Hunt



Find 5 hidden Ornaments

in 5 different ads in this issue (not counting the one above).

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Turkeys were found on pages 1, 9, 12, 15 and 19.

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## CONTEST

— By Angel Morris



*Of all the activities available for families during the holidays, the traditional custom of building gingerbread houses has regained popularity in recent years. With the advent of gingerbread house kits, this fun-for-all-ages activity is as easy as choosing your favorite frostings and candies to add to pre-built structures.*

Traditionalists can still build the houses from scratch themselves, of course, starting with structural gingerbread dough or even graham crackers. Today, however, packaged kits that provide the basic pre-built house allow all ages to join in the fun on a level playing field.

While spending time together building a single house can be enough, some families take the tradition to new levels by

making it a friendly holiday competition. Here are a few ways to implement your own family gingerbread house-building contest.

## SUPPLIES

**Boxed houses.** If you're going the pre-built route, simply stop in your neighborhood grocery or chain store where you'll find a variety of boxed houses from small to large. These typically range in size and shape and include many tube icings, as well as a variety of decorative candy pieces.

**Decorative items.** Families may set a dollar amount in advance and let each participant shop for additional decorative items — these may be candies or craft items, such as pipe cleaners, stickers, popsicle sticks, small ornaments, etc.

**Theme.** To increase the opportunity for creativity, some families choose a unique theme in advance, around which participants design their houses. Themes may be Christmas related or more unique.



Some theme possibilities include: Texas Christmas, My Favorite Movie or House of the Future. Families can decide if everyone follows the same theme or if each individual comes up with his/her own theme and announces the theme upon the contest's end.

*Timing device.* Make sure you have an oven timer, cell phone alarm, clock or watch available.

## SET UP

*Building surface.* Make sure your building surface is well-covered to allow for easy clean up. Towels, newspaper or poster board are inexpensive ways to cover tabletops.

Lay out supplies. Open one gingerbread house box for each participant or team. Family members can compete against each other individually or establish teams such as boys vs. girls, children vs. parents, etc. Place decorative icings and candies at each building station — either those that come in each gingerbread kit or the candy/craft items purchased in advance.

## THE CONTEST

*Criteria.* Agree on the criteria by which each house will be judged. For example, best theme, most creative, most traditional, etc.

*Pick judges.* Agree on who will be the judges. Perhaps you want to invite neighbors over to vote, or you want to post images on social media for friends to rank their favorites. To be fair, you should not indicate which family member designed which house.

*Prizes.* Decide what prize the winner receives. Maybe it's bragging rights for the year, a homemade trophy to keep in one's room or the opportunity to open a Christmas gift earlier than anyone else. Perhaps the winner gets to choose which house he or she actually wants to eat. Prizes need not cost money. The more creative, the better!

*Time.* Choose the amount of time you want to allow for construction of the gingerbread houses, and make all participants aware of start/stop times. Set the timer, and start decorating! It will be fun to watch one another's houses come to life and see how creative individuals or teams can be.

Upon completion, let the agreed upon judging commence, followed by an awards ceremony. Eating the houses together can wrap up the contest, or the gingerbread houses can be displayed on a dining room table for the rest of the season — not only making a one-of-a-kind decorative holiday display, but also as a reminder of the fun time enjoyed by the family.

## BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIP

If your family might enjoy this type of contest but is not interested in eating the completed product, you may consider buying the gingerbread kits after the holiday and saving them for next year. Post-Christmas clearance sales means you can purchase the houses for 50, 75 and even 90 percent off retail prices.

Decorative candies can also be bought after the holidays on deep discount. Making gingerbread houses is a great Christmas activity to do on a budget. **NOW**



CookingNOW

## *In the Kitchen With* MERISA BALLANSAW

— By Angel Morris

A perfectly timed job layoff and the birth of her baby inspired Merisa Ballansaw to pursue something new. “I came from a long line of cooks, so I decided to attend a weekly cake-decorating class at my local Michaels,” she recalled. “I still watch hours of YouTube videos and take classes to perfect my craft.”

Through MB Classy Cakes, Merisa has made hundreds of cakes — including some for celebrities — and baking continues to remind her of the holidays. “My mom would start at night, and the next morning, the dining room table was covered with pies,” she remembered.

Merisa enjoys Audible books that entertain her in the kitchen, traveling, shopping and time with family and friends. She noted, “There is never a dull moment at our gatherings!” **NOW**

### Chocolate Chip Cookies

**3 cups all-purpose flour**  
**1 tsp. baking soda**  
**1 tsp. sea salt**  
**1/2 tsp. baking powder**  
**1 cup unsalted butter, softened**  
**1 cup white granulated sugar**  
**1 cup light brown sugar, packed**

**2 large eggs**  
**2 tsp. pure vanilla extract**  
**2 cups chocolate chips**

**1.** Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line a baking pan with parchment paper; set aside.  
**2.** In a bowl, mix the flour, baking soda, salt and baking powder; set aside.  
**3.** In a separate bowl, cream together the

butter and both sugars until combined. Beat in the eggs and vanilla until fluffy.

**4.** Mix the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until combined. Add the chocolate chips; mix well.

**5.** Roll 2-3 Tbsp. (depending on how large you like your cookies) of the dough at a time into balls; place them evenly spaced on your prepared cookie sheet.

**6.** Bake about 8-10 minutes, or until golden brown. Let cool before serving.

### Pecan Pie

**1 cup Karo light or dark corn syrup**  
**3 eggs**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**2 Tbsp. butter, melted**  
**1 tsp. Spice Islands Pure Vanilla Extract**  
**1 1/2 cups pecans**  
**1 9-inch unbaked or frozen deep-dish piecrust**

**1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a mixing bowl, mix the corn syrup, eggs, sugar, butter and vanilla using a spoon. Stir in the pecans.

2. Pour the filling into the piecrust.
3. Bake on the center rack of the oven until the center reaches 200 F and springs back when tapped lightly, about 55-70 minutes.

### Vanilla Pound Cake

- 1/2 lb. (2 sticks) butter, plus more for the pan
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening
- 3 cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. fine salt
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

- Glaze:
- 3 Tbsp. salted butter
  - 1 cup powdered sugar
  - 3 Tbsp. whole milk (can use more or less depending on consistency desired)
  - 1/2 tsp. vanilla
  - Green/red food coloring

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. With a mixer, cream the butter and shortening together. To the bowl, add the sugar a little at a time. Then, add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each addition.
2. In another bowl, stir the dry ingredients together; add to the mixer alternating with the milk, starting with the flour and ending with the flour. Mix in the vanilla.
3. Pour the batter into a greased and floured tube pan; bake for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, until a toothpick inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean.
4. For glaze: Melt the butter on the stove top. Add the powdered sugar; whisk until smooth. Add the milk 1 Tbsp. at a time.
5. Divide into 2 equal parts. Add green food coloring to one bowl, and red to the other. Whisk until the glaze is colored. Pour over cooled cake.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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# Merry CHRISTMAS

## DECEMBER

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

**12/1-12/2**

### Live Nativity:

Drive through and see the live nativity or park to enjoy other activities for children, such as train rides, hay rides and live animals. Enjoy carolers and hot chocolate. Free admission.

**Friday:** 7:00-9:00 p.m.;

**Saturday:** 6:00-8:30 p.m., The Lone Star Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd.

**12/2**

### Christmas in Red Oak:

The city of Red Oak will be hosting its annual Christmas event. Nonstop, family-friendly holiday fun. Free to the public.

Holiday parade: 9:00 a.m.; selfies with Santa immediately

after the parade at the gazebo, plus activities until noon, Watkins Park, 101 Live Oak.

**12/6**

### Christmas in Ovilla:

Snow slide, a visit with Santa, mini carnival rides, vendors and more. 6:00-8:30 p.m., Ovilla Road Baptist Church, 3251 Ovilla Rd.

**12/8**

### Movie in the Park:

Bring your lawn chairs, blankets, coolers and snacks and join the Red Oak Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with the Red Oak Library for an outdoor showing of *The Polar Express*. 6:00-8:00 p.m.,

Watkins Park, 101 Live Oak.

**12/10**

### Christmas at Oaks Church:

Get ready to take a journey through time as we explore Christmas throughout the decades and celebrate the birth of Jesus in this production including musical performances, live animals and more. 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m., noon, 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., 777 S. I-35E, Red Oak.

**12/12**

### The Shining

### Cowboy Christmas:

New and old Christmas music with a country style featuring costumes, lights and children's

ministry. 10:00-11:00 a.m., The Lone Star Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd.

## Wednesdays and Thursdays

### Senior Citizen Center of Red Oak:

Enjoy coffee, juice and donuts each morning, as well as a sponsored lunch on first-third Thursdays and a potluck on fourth Thursdays. Also, games, puzzles, bingo and informative guest speakers. 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. (469) 218-1217.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [angel.morris@nowmagazines.com](mailto:angel.morris@nowmagazines.com).



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DECEMBER 2

## THE POLAR EXPRESS MOVIE NIGHT

Enjoy a cozy evening as you sit back and relax with family and friends. Bring your favorite snacks, blankets, and good vibes. It's going to be an epic night full of laughter and excitement while watching the screening of *The Polar Express*.

DECEMBER 4  
6:30PM-8:30PM

## BLOCK PARTY & TREE LIGHTING

'Tis the season to be merry, and we're spreading holiday cheer like never before! Get ready for an unforgettable Christmas Block Party. Gather around the Christmas Tree for the annual Tree Lighting with special guest performances.

DECEMBER 9

## CHRISTMAS CRAFT MAKING AT SANTA'S WORKSHOP

Looking for a fun and creative way to celebrate the holiday season? Join us for our Christmas Craft Class where you'll learn to make beautiful, handmade holiday wreaths, and we will have gifts for sale.

DECEMBER 23

## CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

Join us for a magical night of music as we celebrate the most wonderful time of the year. Our Christmas musical extravaganza will surely fill your heart with joy and your spirit with holiday cheer. Visit us online for showtimes and tickets.

## Holiday Weekend Celebration

JOIN US SATURDAY AND SUNDAY FROM DECEMBER 2 THRU JANUARY 7 FOR HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND TREATS FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY. CHECK ONLINE SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS.

## HOLIDAY TRAIN RIDE

Get ready for a magical holiday adventure on our festive kiddie train ride. Don't miss this chance to create cherished holiday memories with your family. Get your tickets now and hop aboard the holiday fun. See you at the station.

## FACE PAINTING

'Tis the season to spread holiday cheer, and what better way to do it than with some fabulous Christmas face painting designs. We can't wait to see your holiday spirit shine.

## PAINT AND PARTY

Calling all little artists! Get ready to embark on a colorful adventure at our upcoming Kids' Paint and Party event. It's a day of creative fun, laughter, and imagination for your little ones. Let's make this a day filled with paint, laughter, and unforgettable memories for your young artists!

## FUN WITH CHRISTMAS CHARACTERS AND GAMES

Looking to keep the little ones entertained and in the holiday spirit? Check out these delightful Christmas games that are perfect for kids of all ages.



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