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Publisher's Notebook

Merry Christmas

The spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Farmville, just ask our very own Santa — Bill Jenkins. Along with his lovely wife Wanda, aka Mrs. Claus, this duo has been spreading the joy of Christmas for decades. With a mighty “ho ho ho” and a real beard to match Jenkins dons his red suit and black boots bringing Christmas Cheer to area residents young and old. Turn to Page 6 for more of the story.



Betty Ramsey, Publisher

Lovely poinsettias in bright red, white and even purple, are a holiday tradition and can be seen everywhere this time of year. Did you know that Virginia is one of the top five producers of poinsettias for the United States Market? I didn't until reading this edition of From the Ground Up by Dr. Cynthia Wood. On Page 16 you can learn more about the history of the poinsettia, how to keep them fresh and maybe, just maybe, with a lot of care get them to bloom again. Thank you, Dr. Wood, for keeping us so well informed!

Kicking off the Christmas season was the annual Christmas tree lighting held Friday, Nov. 22 at the downtown plaza. Photographer extraordinaire

John Karratti was there to capture the moment “Bruce the Spruce” lit up the night. Pictures of the event are on Pages 20 and 21.

All of us at the *Farmville the Magazine* wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Farmville the Magazine strives to tell the story of our community. We are blessed and grateful to be a part of this community and are thankful that there are so many great stories to share.

Within these pages you will find more stories and we hope you will enjoy reading them as much as we enjoy bringing them to you. This is a magazine about and for you, we welcome your ideas and invite you to share with us what you would like to hear more about by sending us a note at P.O. Box 307, Farmville, VA, 23901, giving us a call at (434) 392-4151 or sending me an email at Betty.Ramsey@FarmvilleTheMag.com.

We publish *Farmville the Magazine* in March, April, May, summer, September, October, November and December. We invite you to pick up a copy of the latest issue as there is sure to be someone you know inside — a neighbor, a family member, a friend or perhaps even you!

Betty Ramsey is Publisher of Farmville the Magazine. He can be reached at Betty.Ramsey@FarmvilleTheMag.com.

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On the Cover: Santa Claus has come to town. Prince Edward County Supervisor Bill Jenkins has spent decades playing the role around Farmville. His wife, Wanda, sits beside him playing Mrs. Claus.



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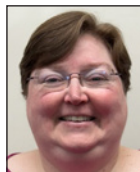
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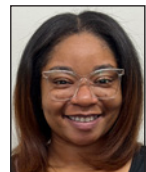
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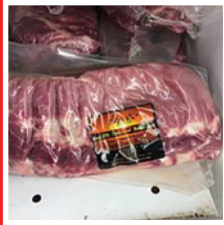
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A visit from Farmville's Santa Claus



For Farmville and surrounding areas, Santa comes in the form of Prince Edward County Supervisor Bill Jenkins. Here he is with his wife, Wanda, who is posing as Mrs. Claus.

By Nate Pentecost

It's pretty common for someone to have a side gig these days. For most people though, it isn't being Santa Claus. Bill Jenkins has served on the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors since 2022, but the friendly-faced, white-bearded 70-year old Lockett representative has been dressing up as "the big man in the red suit" for organizations around the community almost every Christmas season since his forties.

"I love being on the board. It's amazing how much we've grown since I've been there," said Jenkins. "When you get involved (politically), you see how it all comes together."

Jenkins said it was his nephew who prompted him to get him involved with his role as Kris Kringle, when he suggested his Uncle would make a great Santa Claus. His first time moonlighting as Santa was actually at his nephew's Cub Scouts' Christmas event.

The civil servant said his annual holiday visits to events around town as Santa Claus have become a multi-generational tradition for some people in the area. Families with kids will approach and the

parents will recall the times they shared with Jenkins as 'St. Nick' when they were kids. Jenkins tells the story of a parent who came up to him one day at Sailor's Creek.

'A fella came up to me and said, Santa, see my boy over there? He's 17 years old. You held him when he was a baby.'

Jenkins has adorned Santa's legendary red suit for city departments, churches, social clubs, school outings, family parties, and store events throughout Prince Edward County, and even sometimes further away in the Commonwealth.

As for the white beard? He comes by it honestly. Jenkins says the last time anyone saw him clean-shaven, was 1971.

"It's my signature," Jenkins said of his trademark white beard. "It's what I go by. People see me and say, Bill Jenkins, when are you going to shave? And I always say, I haven't gotten around to it yet."

A ROLE HE WAS MEANT FOR

And while he juggles a lot of hats as Prince Edward Supervisor, it's Santa Claus that seems to be the role he was destined to play.

The Vice Chair of the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors



Prince Edward Administrator Doug Stanley, left, has a conversation with “Santa Claus” Bill Jenkins.

recalled a bashful child who waited in the wings nearly an hour before approaching him at a party he appeared at as Santa Claus. The boy finally worked up the courage to come over and tell Jenkins what he wanted for Christmas and then promptly scampered off.

He remembered a time a friend pulled one over on him by scheduling him as St. Nick at an event spoken only in French. Jenkins doesn't speak French.

Jenkins also reminisced about a night when a kid of about 10 years old attending a party approached a table full of wrapped Christmas treats and began to open them before they were ready to be served. He was softly told by Santa “I wouldn't do that, young man” before the child went wide-eyed and shuffled away from Old Man Christmas and the scene.

“He got busted by Santa Claus,” Jenkins said with a laugh. “Stories like those, that's my reward.”

The longtime Heart of Virginia resident and his family have been in the region for more than a century. His grandfather was born on the

property he owns back in 1903 and his father before that. The last three generations of his family grew up in the home he still lives in. Just as long-term is his role as Santa. It's something he's done for decades and plans to continue as long as he can.

'THAT'S WONDERFUL'

This past year, Jenkins transformed into St. Nick at Sailor's Creek State Park for their Christmas events. Last Christmas Eve, he was at Elk Hall for a toy giveaway for the less fortunate. For places that need a Santa, Jenkins is more than happy to fill in.

“It's just to bring the children and the older people a little bit of happiness,” Jenkins explained. “For the little ones to think ‘what if this is true?’ and for the older people to have those memories and to come back every year. That's wonderful.”

Jenkins sees himself serving on the Prince Edward Board of Supervisors for as long as the public has confidence in him. He'll be serving the community as Santa for the foreseeable future too.



The popular Christmas train project arrives for another season.



'Kimbroke' returns to Farmville

A Christmas train town comes to life

By Char Lavigne

Kimbrook might not be a real town, but this month, it once again opened for visitors to view its Christmas train. Farmville resident Jim Kimbrough has been working on the massive model train world in his detached garage since 2020, and every year he sends his holiday train around the tracks for people to witness.

The newest section of his world, the town of Cripple Creek, took three months to assemble from both household materials such as foam board and more specialized tools from collectors sites. He works on the world of Kimbrook for three to four hours a day, going from mapping the town sites on a computer program to building the physical landscape to wiring the miniature train tracks.

Kimbrough's inspiration for the world came from his childhood love of model trains, but his motivations to go through with the idea happened later in his life.

"I play golf," he said. "My wife said 'you're going to have to find another hobby when you retire, because you can't play golf every day.'"

"I started thinking about what I loved, and I guess the little kid inside of me came back to when I had model trains when I





was a kid," he said.

That love of trains partly came from his grandfather, who worked on the railroad. When he was little, Jim became fascinated with the complex mechanisms and designs of trains. Once he retired, Jim started looking at model train layouts on the internet and decided to build one himself, along with a world for it to exist in.

LOOKING AT THE DETAILS

The detail in Kimbrook is painstaking. Every miniature person is individually glued down, the signs on every building printed, cut, and pasted on. Even the mountain outside of Cripple Creek was carved by hand, with a fine powder sprinkled on delicately to replicate snow

dusting the mountaintop. The passion project is clearly important to Kimbrough: part of why he purchased his home was the presence of a large detached garage that could serve as a workshop for him. The devoted space for his model train world allowed him to spend up to 11 hours a day working during the COVID-19 pandemic, speeding up his progress significantly and allowing him to run his first Christmas train in the winter of 2020.

He chose characters that he wanted to be part of his plan, and also knew that Christmas would be a big element.

The complete set-up took about 3 years to create, which is actually less than Kimbrough had anticipated. When he first started, he planned to work on it "several

hours a day," but his plans changed when COVID struck.

"We couldn't go anywhere, and that really sped it up a bit," Kimbrough said.

For about a year, he'd spend up to 8 or 9 hours a day working on the project. One of the reasons the project was so time-consuming was due to the scenery, as Kimbrough said "a lot of it is done by hand."

Some, of course, can be bought, but Kimbrough loved the idea of creating unique backdrops and additions that wouldn't be found anywhere else. With all of the time Kimbrough's invested, it now has an amazing finish and holiday feel.

Kimbrough did it all solo too, taking the time to enjoy each and every aspect. His favorite part? Creating his own holiday





town with just his hands and a vision.

Kimbrough explained that he loves creating the layout and scenery. Amongst other hobbyists, scenery tends to be a favorite design element, allowing each model set to stand out. He also loves to see the whole project come together.

WHAT TO EXPECT THIS YEAR

So when the doors open and you visit ‘Kimbrough’, he will have strung up dozens of yards of fairy lights and will be running three trains singlehandedly – a challenging task, given the potential for collision on the tracks. The challenge has paid off for him, with the annual Christmas train starting as an idea his children offered and growing into something more.

“It started off slow, but we’ve got about 250 people interested in just the December 1 show, so it’s been growing more and more every year, and it’s been fun.”

As much as the trains are the star of the show, Kimbrough’s real love is for the scenery.

“I love building the towns and working with scenery,” he said. “I think building the towns is where you can really see it and have a lot of fun with it taking shape. I really enjoy putting this town together and kind of tinkering with it all; really, there’s something a little bit different all the time.”

To show off the changes in the town this year and display his Christmas train, Kimbrough opened his workshop to visitors this year on Dec. 1 and Dec. 15.



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A close-up photograph of a plate of food. In the center is a wooden bowl filled with a vibrant red marinara sauce, topped with a generous amount of shredded white cheese and finely chopped green herbs. Surrounding the bowl are several golden-brown, fried egg rolls, each also topped with shredded white cheese. The entire dish is presented on a white plate with a blue floral pattern around the edge.

Spinach and artichoke dip egg rolls

These spinach and artichoke dip-stuffed egg rolls are great with marinara sauce or a side of ranch.

Photos and recipe by Alexa Massey

I tend not to mess with the classics at the holiday dinner table. Christmas isn't Christmas without your classic stuffing, mashed potatoes, ham, etc. Similarly, there's probably over 1,000 ways to cook a turkey or to make a mean mac n' cheese. Why create one more?

No, when I brainstorm recipes for the holidays I like to instead focus on appetizers. What can you feed a mob of hungry partygoers that is quick, easy and delicious? You need something familiar with a twist. This season, I think I've found an hors d'oeuvre that fits the bill perfectly: spinach and artichoke dip egg rolls!

These bad boys are exactly what they sound like – cheesy, spinachy bites of heaven wrapped in golden-brown goodness. They're a step above your standard spinach and artichoke dip, and they can be made by frying in oil or air frying!

Here's the recipe:

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 12 minutes

Total time: 32 minutes

Yields: Approx. 12 servings

INGREDIENTS:

- One package egg roll wrappers
- One 8-oz block cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup parmesan romano cheese
- ½ cup mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup thawed frozen spinach with the water squeezed out
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 12-oz jar of marinated artichoke hearts, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp. Basil
- 1 tsp. Parsley
- 1 tsp. Garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Vegetable oil for deep-frying or a cooking spray if air-frying

As promised, this recipe is quick and easy. Begin by chopping your artichoke pieces and garlic. After thawing your frozen spinach, use a cheesecloth or dishcloth to squeeze as much moisture out of the spinach as possible.

Once these items are prepared, combine all ingredients except for the egg roll wrappers into a large bowl. Mix the ingredients thoroughly before transferring into a large piping bag. If you don't have a piping bag, simply add the mixture to a ziplock bag and cut a small hole into one of the corners.

Lay out your egg roll wrappers on a clean surface. Using your piping bag, pipe a generous serving of the spinach and artichoke dip onto each wrapper. Once every egg roll has had its filling piped out, wrap each egg roll by grabbing the bottom of the wrapper and folding it tightly over the mixture. Fold in the sides of the wrapper before rolling it up the rest of the way.

Once your egg rolls are all wrapped, I recommend air frying them.

To do this, preheat your air fryer to 400°. Spray each side of the egg rolls with some cooking spray and then place them in the air fryer to cook for 12 minutes, flipping once half-way through.

You can also cook the egg rolls by deep-frying them in oil. To do this, heat peanut or vegetable oil to 350° and fry the egg rolls for 4-7 minutes or until golden brown. Carefully remove the egg rolls from the oil and allow them to cool on a bed of paper towels. Serve with marinara or ranch for dipping.

And there you have it! A crispy and unique take on classic spinach and artichoke dip which pairs perfectly with the flavor profile of a typical holiday meal. These bundles of deliciousness come together in minutes and are sure to please a party.



Make sure not to over-stuff your egg roll wrappers!



While the spinach and artichoke dip egg rolls take very few ingredients to make, they taste amazing!



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From the Ground Up

Red is the most popular color for poinsettias, and Prestige Red is the one most people think of when they envision a poinsettia.

The Poinsettia: Our Most Popular Christmas Plant

Photos and article by Dr. Cynthia Wood

Poinsettias, or cuetlaxochimi, were prized by the Aztecs for use in treating fevers and coloring fabric. After the Spanish arrived, poinsettias gradually became associated with Christmas, especially after they became a popular addition to the Christmas procession through the town of Taxco de Alarcon. The rise of the legend of Pepita and her poinsettia flowers for the baby Jesus further cemented the association of the holiday and the plant.

In the United States, the ascendance of the poinsettia to the most popular Christmas potted plant took a different route. In the late 1820s, the American diplomat and amateur botanist, Joel Poinsett, had some of the plants shipped to his home in South Carolina. He cultivated them and gave them to friends at Christmas. Within 10 years, word of the interesting plant had spread to individuals in the nursery trade. Robert Buist began to grow poinsettias on a larger scale and sold them under their scientific name, *Euphorbia pulcherrima*. Before long, the plant was popularly known as poinsettia, in honor of Joel Poinsett.

Even though poinsettias were becoming increasingly popular as Christmas plants, there were still issues with their cultivation. Paul Ecke III made a major advance when he figured out how to grow the plants in pots and control their size. He eventually established Ecke Ranch, which at one time, supplied nearly 70 percent of all



White poinsettias are increasingly popular.

poinsettias in the United States market, as well as 50 percent of the global market. Today, the state of Virginia is one of the top five producers of poinsettias for the United States market.

As market demand has increased, poinsettias have evolved. They are available in several sizes and many different colors. In addition to the classic red, there are deep yellow poinsettias, dusky rose ones, many with marbled and speckled blooms, and even purple ones. All make beautiful holiday displays.

To select a poinsettia that will last throughout the holidays, be sure to examine the plants carefully. Check to make sure that the leaves are dark green and don't show any sign of yellowing or wilting. The cluster of cyanthia, the true flowers in the center of the colorful "petals," should be full. If some are missing, that's a sign that the plant is past its prime. Once you've selected your poinsettias, it's important to protect them from the cold by placing in plastic sleeves for the trip home. Cold temperatures stress the plants and shorten their lifespan.

At home, the care of poinsettias is relatively simple. Poinsettias need a consistent level of moisture to prevent them from dropping their leaves. Water them every 3 to 4 days, but don't allow them to sit in saucers of water. It's generally a good idea to remove the decorative foil wrapping around the pots so that they can drain properly when being watered. While poinsettias can tolerate a variety of light levels, they will become leggy if kept in areas with very low light. When the plants become overly scraggly but some of the blooms are still pretty, cut them and display them in a vase.

If you're a particularly ambitious gardener or just need a project, you can try to get your plants to rebloom. Just know that they're notoriously finicky. Put the plants outside after the danger of frost has passed and fertilize them regularly. In fall, bring them indoors and provide a consistent 12 hours of total darkness every night. The poinsettias might bloom again, but probably won't be as showy as when they were purchased.

Enjoy your poinsettias this holiday season. The plants are beautiful, relatively maintenance free, and not harmful to pets and children. Contrary to the widespread belief that poinsettias are toxic, The National Capital Poison Center, Harvard Health, and numerous extension agencies all confirm that the plants aren't poisonous, even though they can cause skin irritation, nausea, vomiting, and salivation.



Pink poinsettias are available in many different shades of pink, as well as double flowers



Museums, retail establishments, and even restaurants often feature poinsettias in holiday displays.

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Christmas told in three photos



A look at the newer wood nativity, put out by the Caden family. Photo courtesy of David Caden.

By Brian Carlton

Everyone has different traditions when it comes to Christmas, pieces they brought to Farmville from families, faith or culture. As we head knee deep into the Christmas season, we thought it might be interesting to ask people in town about those traditions and share some about where they came from. So we posed a question. If you could sum up Christmas in one photo, what would it be?

For Farmville resident David Caden, the holiday is summed up in a picture of an item, similar to one that's been in his family for decades. More than 40 years ago, his grandfather Davis Caden created a wood nativity set, to be shared. Now that original has gotten a bit older and so it's stored away mostly now to preserve it. And so the photo David shares is of a newer wood nativity, one that will be out for display when family and friends drop by. The three carvings are of Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus.

"He's no longer with us, so every year when we bring out the nativity, it helps us feel like he's still with us, like he's still a part of the celebration,"

Caden said. "It's also the first thing we put out when setting out Christmas decorations, to help remind us all of the reason we're celebrating."

If it seems like nativity scenes have been around forever, that's not entirely wrong. The concept, celebrating Christmas through images of the Holy Family, stretches back to the 1200s. Specifically, Saint Francis of Assisi is considered the designer of the first nativity scene. In 1223, he became inspired by his recent visit to the Holy Land, where he had seen what's believed to be Jesus' birthplace. He decided to carve a wooden version of the stable and the Holy Family to encourage Christians to worship. As people heard about what he did, they decided to try out carvings of their own, wanting to do the same thing.

LET'S TALK ABOUT NISSE

Leading up to the big day, there's a good chance you've seen stuffed gnomes popping up all over the place. These tiny guys typically have a long beard, long legs and a hat pulled over their eyes. Between the hat and beard, you can't really see much of its actual body. These gnomes have a tie

to winter celebrations that dates back centuries, as Prince Edward County resident Ashley Hope explains.

“My grandma’s family came from Norway,” Hope said. “They would tell stories of the Nisse and that’s become a tradition here at Christmas time. When we get together as a family, there’s always a time when one or two start telling stories of the Nisse.”

And so that’s the second of our three photos in this story. It’s one of the Nisse, wearing a red hat and getting ready for Christmas.

The Nisse are house gnomes in Scandinavian folklore. They typically live in or under the house, protecting the children and animals from anything evil. In Norway, they play a role very similar to Santa. The idea is if you’re nice to them, they’ll be nice back. In other words, if children

clean their rooms (so the Nisse don’t trip), chop firewood (so the Nisse stay warm) or do similar chores, they’ll end up with some gifts.

But what about the smells of Christmas? Farmville’s Debbie Marley said the smell of sugar cookies always makes her think of Christmas.

“We have two parties in my family,” Marley said. “There’s the Christmas Day get-together and one on Epiphany (Jan. 6). We always have sugar cookies on Christmas Day. My grandma, my mom and now me, we’ve all made cookies, with help from any younger ones in the family who want to



The Nisse gnome makes an appearance, as we’re set to celebrate the holiday. Photo courtesy of Ashley Hope.

learn.”

Sugar cookies even have a historical name that remind people of Christmas. In the 1700s, they were called “Nazareth Cookies”, coming from a German Protestant settlement in Nazareth, Pennsylvania.

A bit of nutcracker luck Finally, we reach over the border to Buckingham resident Brandon Huxley’s family, which has a specific tradition. For a person’s first Christmas, either by birth, marriage or however they’ve become part of the family, the new member is given a nutcracker.

“My great-grandpa would tell us all stories when we were kids,” Huxley said. “He said that nutcrackers were good luck, and after he married great-grandma, he decided that he would start a tradition to share that luck, so a new family member is blessed, going into the New Year. We still do that today and keep telling that story to our kids, about good luck from nutcrackers.”



Brandon Huxley’s nutcracker goes up for display in his house. Photo courtesy of Brandon Huxley.

The idea of nutcrackers being a source of good luck goes back centuries in Germany. There’s an old folktale that talks about a puppet maker who won a nutcracker challenge by making a puppet with a mouth for a lever to crack the nuts. In Germany, you’d see nutcrackers in the form of a soldier, a knight or a king, with this practice dating all the way back to the 15th century.



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PARTY *Pix*

TREE LIGHTING KICKS OFF CHRISTMAS SEASON

Every year, residents from around the region gather in the Downtown Plaza for Farmville's tree lighting. Held in late November, it is usually the first of all the towns and counties in the region, truly marking the arrival of the Christmas season. And 2024 was no different. High school bands played Christmas songs, people sipped hot chocolate and children of all ages counted down to zero, as town officials flipped the switch and welcomed in the Christmas season. PHOTOS BY JOHN KARRATTI





PARTY *Pix*

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Va Smoove Rydaz has been serving Thanksgiving meals at the Train Station in Farmville since 2013. Established in 2008 there are currently 12 members: Co-Presidents Marvin Lee and Valeria Anderson, Co-Vice-Presidents Donald Hunter and Lisa Harris, Event Coordinator Brian Womack, Secretary Karen Langhorne, Treasure Lanell Eanes, Road Captains James Clark and Ron Lee, Sergeant at Arms Henry Dillard and members James Swann and Raymond Riley.



Harris notes that the club has received donations from area organizations with the Farmville Lions Club being their top donor. Serving anywhere from 700 to 1,200 meals each year, Harris had this to say, "We are very fortunate to serve the community and we enjoy serving the community." The group also holds an annual Toy Drive for area children.
PHOTOS BY KERRY MOSSLER



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Whether you are bringing new life into the world, need routine wellness care or have been struggling with women's health issues, our experienced team of obstetricians & gynecologists, nurse-midwives and practitioners are here for you. At Centra, we believe that all women deserve excellent compassionate care close to home.

To learn more about the women's health and maternity services that are available in the Farmville area, please call **434.315.2950** or scan the QR code.



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