

How Do You Holiday?

Contest Entries

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Story Submissions

Steve Schmidt (Cherashore Playground)

My holiday this time of the year is Christmas. My tradition comes from my mother. I organize a program known as "Operation Santa Claus". I have been doing for the past twenty-six years. I organize family and friends and we adopt children from ActionAIDS. Each child receives 2 toys and a hooded sweat shirt. This year we were able to adopt 149 children and I delivered 447 gifts. Through my work with PPR I decided to extend my program to adopt children from the facilities I worked at including Heitzman, McIlvain and Cherashore. This year I was able to provide a gift to each child in McIlvain's Tot-Rec and After School Programs as well as adopt two families in the Frankford community that participate at McIlvain. I also joined the efforts of the CYA Gators to provide over 400 toys to 100 children in the Olney section surrounding Cherashore.

Steve Schmidt
Recreation Leader 2
Cherashore Playground

	Part of the 149 gifts collected for ActionAIDS		Gifts donated to a worthy family in the Frankford community
	Some of the gifts donated to Cherashore Playground		Gifts donated to Tot Rec and After School Programs at McIlvain Playground

[Link to OPERATION SANTA program](#)

Jade Ryan (submitted by Betsy Henninger)

My name is Betsy Henninger and I run the after school program at the Fox Chase Recreation Center. I have attached a holiday story and picture from one of our own after school students who wanted to share a story about one of her holiday traditions.

Participants name: Jade Ryan

Age: 10

Rec: Fox Chase



Every year me and my family go to pick out a Christmas tree. We live close to a Christmas tree lot so we go there. We have to get a medium sized tree. It has to be big and bushy. We tie it to the roof of our car and go home. When we go home my dad drills a hole in the bottom of the tree so the tree gets more water. After that we put it up in our house. We have to go down stairs to the storage room to get ornaments. We buy 2 more ornaments every year. After we get the ornaments we put them on the tree. After all the ornaments are on the tree we put on the star. Me and my brother each year take turns putting on the star [my brother did it last year]. Then after that is all done we bake cookies for Santa. Those are my holiday traditions.

Russo Park's After School Program

(submitted by Bruce E. Platt)

How do we do our holidays? Well these are just some of the many things we do during this special time! We like to drink hot chocolate and watch movies with our friends and family. We visit our family and exchange gifts. Some of us go on vacation to different places and resorts, such as Disney World. We like to make gingerbread men and houses with our family. On those very cold and snowy days, we enjoy going to play in the snow. We also like to make snowmen, snowballs, and go sledding. Another thing was like to do is to sit down with our whole family family and enjoy a big dinner. Lastly, we like to just spend time with our family and loved ones and just be with each other.



Max Myers Playground (submitted by Charles A. Christman III)

Every year there is this amazing tradition at Max Myers Playground that makes all the child here at the Tot-Rec program full of smiles and glee, "Breakfast with Santa."

The holiday tradition started over twenty years ago originally "Pancakes with Santa" then later transitioned with "Lunch with Santa", with the Max Myers staff making spaghetti and meatballs from scratch. Every Tot-Rec child receives not only a present from Santa Claus, but a special gift and treat from the Max Myers Teachers!

Today the tradition continues, but now back to it's original roots of "Breakfast with Santa". Now the children get cereal, muffins, donuts, and juice to share with their classmates, siblings and parents. Max Myers Playground looks forward to continuing this festive and amazing traditional for years to come!



Pelbano R.C.

(submitted by Lauren Murphy)

At Pelbano Recreation, our holiday tradition takes the form of our Healthy Holidays Event. Crudité platters of fresh fruit, vegetables arranged to resemble reindeer and snowmen, and chicken nuggets with low-fat salad dressing help our young patrons appreciate a healthy approach to eating, even during the holidays. Low-fat chips, whole wheat pretzels, organic fruit juice with no sugar added and cider from a local farm were also served. Santa even made a special appearance, even though he had a tight schedule that involved skating at nearby Tarken Ice Rink the next day. In Philadelphia, inactivity and poor eating habits contribute to lifestyle-related health issues such as type two diabetes, even in school-age children. Our invaluable GSI and RSI team, Debra Kurtz and Kathy Lawson, helped to make this event an enjoyable success by orchestrating present wrapping, acquiring decorations and place settings, and stringing lights.



Three Kings "Los Tres Reyes Magos "

(submitted by Yadira Curet)



Dia de Reyes is celebrated in Puerto Rico January 6. Tradition is we put out grass for the camels or horses underneath our beds. This day is actually the day children use to receive their Christmas gifts in remembrance of Magi bearing gifts for Christ Child. Now days the children receive their gifts on Christmas day but receive a much humbler gift on January 6. The town has a great festival re-enacting the journey and bands play music. There is a lot of food and drinks for everyone. Our version of Christmas caroling is called "Parranda" where a group of people with instruments go around and literally knock on stranger's door and sing. The tradition is the family that opens the door listens to the song and joins the group and so they go door to door until they end up at the first house.

so humbling to
and enjoy the coming
talk about the
generation to

(Yadira is in the center



I recently went to Puerto Rico for a few days and witness the procession of the Three Kings. It was watch the local people come together at the Plaza of the Kings and watching the performers on stage traditions and the stories passed down from generations.

of the bottom photograph)

Saint Nick Visits Vogt (submitted by John Brady)



On a crystal clear Friday night in December, Jolly Old Saint Nick appeared at Vogt Recreation Center to greet the children in the Tot Rec and After-School Program. The children had hung their decorations with care hoping Saint Nick would arrive so the children could share their wishes with the Jolly Old Man. The children were served a gourmet meal of pizza and sips in the anticipation of the arrival of Saint Nick. Saint Nick arrived to the cheer of the parents/guardians and children. Saint Nick and his helper elves quickly got to business of visiting every child in the room. Parents/guardians took pictures of the children and Saint Nick. Many parents/ guardians shared stories of the children's exploits from the past year with Jolly Old Saint Nick. The Old Man was astounded with the stories he heard. All the children promised Saint Nick that they would be good for their parents/guardians. When Jolly Old Saint Nick got back to the North Pole he ordered all his elves to start working on the Vogt children's wishes.



Palmer Playground Holiday Show (submitted by Valerie Arhondakis)

On December 15th at 6pm at Thomas Holme school Palmer playground had 50 children ages 2 to 10 perform for their family and friends. There were 9 numbers and the auditorium was standing room only. This is just one example of how the staff of our fine Department celebrates the efforts of there students everyday and especially during the holiday season. Thank you to supervisor, Neal

Regan, Assistant supervisor, Veronica Lawson and the staff: Ms. Delia Spiker and Ms. Liz McDonough, (tot rec teachers), Tori Lang (Dance teacher), Liz McDonough, Kathy Fiore, TJ Dowdell, Allison Hand, and Eric Mulholland (Afterschool Program staff.)



Mitchell Playground (submitted by Barbara Ryan)

At Mitchell Playground, the children love the winter holiday season. They enjoy all of the crafts that the staff does with them. We made salt dough ornaments and little salt dough snowmen. Decorating the bulletin board is really a blast to do with them. They love seeing their name and photo on the bulletin board along with their snowmen and penguin artwork. We started our popsicle snowflakes this week. The end of January we will be making bird food so that the many birds around Mitchell Playground will be fed and healthy through the winter. By far, their most favorite activity was to make cinnamon soft taco shell snowflakes that they could eat. All of the children and staff love being at Mitchell during the holidays!



LOVE Park Tree Lighting Rhyme (Submitted by Jennifer Sunday)

All the little kids' faces were filled with cheer because they knew St. Nick would be here. They strolled into the park with lanterns in hand, in great anticipation of seeing the band. The Philly Pops performed a musical number while everyone buzzed about it being the warmest December ever! There was so much Christmas in the Village this year with warm nuts, cocoa, Santa and reindeer. Everyone's smiling faces were aglow when we had a celebrity appearance from CBS Meteorologist Kate Bilo. She did the countdown while Mark Focht from PPR pulled the switch. It was all so perfect-- LOVE Park got its wish. It was a great night we will never forget; the last tree lighting before renovations was the best one yet!

A PPR Holiday Tradition at Mann Older Adult Center (Submitted by Patty-Pat Kozlowski)



Martha Stewart better watch her back. The hostess with the mostest might have some competition with PPR's own Barbara McCabe, Director of Strategic Engagement. Stewart might have a huge arts and crafts conglomerate, but McCabe has the senior citizens at the Fredric Mann Older Adult Center at 5th Street and Allegheny Avenue.

For the past several years, McCabe has led a holiday craft-making workshop at Mann with about two dozen seniors. Some years they make fresh Christmas wreaths, but a favorite is table centerpieces.

This holiday tradition started when McCabe was a recreation leader in the 1990s at Shissler Rec Center in Fishtown, and she organized and programmed a holiday centerpiece-making workshop for community members. McCabe took a workshop on wreath making at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and shared her crafty knowledge year after year at PPR sites.

The holiday wreath and centerpiece making now lies within PPR's Stewardship Unit, and every year McCabe and the Stewardship team pick up a huge order of Fraiser Fir and White Pine balsam bundles from Pennock Floral Company in NJ and set up shop at Mann Older Adult Center for the workshop.










About 40 seniors joined PPR this year at Mann to make centerpieces complete with holiday candles and festive decorations of glittered reindeer ornaments and bright poinsettia plants to create their arrangements. While the majority of the seniors only speak Spanish, a translator provides guidance to McCabe's directions.

Both PPR staff and Mann senior citizens look forward to this tradition. During the workshop, Christmas music is played, and everyone enjoys cakes and coffee. By the end of the 2-hour course, the seniors start dancing and show off their centerpieces very proudly. Every year the project gets better and better, and somewhere, Martha Stewart is beginning to sweat!

Photo Submissions

Piccoli Playground ([Facebook submission](#))

	A close up of the first half of the mirror art. A very colorful snowman and a simple message to all from Philadelphia Parks and Recreation "Find Your Path"		Santa's suit was left behind.
	Next to our reading tree sits Santa and presents. Also, seasons greetings to all.		Lights, snowflakes, and gingerbread men are a sign of the season.
	The bulletin board simply says it all. Happy Holidays!		The tree stands all in the rec center!
	The mirror art resembles our holiday spirit, with lights and all.		

Robin Klink

“In my cube, Q.B. the Moose stands guard over my glowing crystal snowballs that are scented with Peppermint oils for the holiday! :) ”



Cynthia Douglas

PPR Door Decoration Contest





Clemente Playground
([Facebook submission](#))



C.B.Moore's Gifts to the Community!

Bulletin board created by C.B. Moore's After



School Program



Fitzpatrick Playground Holiday Photos (email submission)





Rivera R.C.
([Facebook submission](#))

Holiday Nutcrackers, Cookies and Stockings for the youth at Rivera Recreation Center.



Gifford Recreation Center
(submitted by Jillian Deitz)



Ramp Playground

(submitted by Eric Kurtz)

