

Christmas in West Allis

Christmas on the Avenue Starts the Season

“We think of Christmas on the Avenue as the real kickoff to the holiday season,” remarks Emily Eineichner, promotions coordinator for the Downtown West Allis Business Improvement District (DWABID). Christmas on the Avenue allows downtown West Allis businesses the opportunity to throw open their doors and welcome the community to celebrate the season. Activities, refreshments, hayrides, music and more make this family-friendly day a highlight of many families’ Christmas calendars.

The 2017 Christmas on the Avenue will be bigger than ever as the event marks its ninth anniversary. More than twenty businesses are participating this year, and the build up to the big day begins in late October, when BMO Harris Bank kicks off their sponsorship of a coloring contest for school age children. Kids can color through November, for the chance of winning a ride on a wagon in the West Allis Christmas Parade. The DWABID displays all of the kids’ artwork in downtown shop windows during the holiday season. Crosspoint Church, 11000 W. Oklahoma Ave., will warm up Christmas on the Avenue guests with free s’mores, and tasty treats will be sold by the West Allis Celebrations Committee at Santa’s Café, which will be set up in the City Hall Art Gallery, 7525 W. Greenfield Ave. A storyteller portraying Charles Dickens will be on hand to share an adaption of “A Christmas Carol,” and activities including crafts and holiday-themed games will entertain visitors throughout the day. Music will be performed by the Suburban Singers, as well as the Swing Street Big Band. Children can also write and mail their letters to Santa, and enjoy complimentary sweet holiday treats.

Special guests straight from the North Pole will also be on hand at Christmas on the Avenue this year: live reindeer will visit Eden Garden and Pets, 1439 S. 70th St., to provide photo opportunities so families can preserve the memories they make at Christmas on the Avenue.



Christmas on the Avenue 2016

Coming Together for Tree Lighting and Community Sing

As Christmas on the Avenue winds down, the community gathers in Centennial Plaza at West Allis City Hall to join voices with school choirs in singing favorite Christmas carols before the City Christmas tree is lit. From Oct. 25 – Nov. 15, West Allis children have the opportunity to donate a non-perishable food item at City Hall or the West Allis Public Library to West Allis food banks, in exchange for an entry ticket into a drawing to be the child who helps Mayor Dan Devine light the tree. The winner joins Mayor Devine at the Tree Lighting Ceremony, after which Mayor Devine is escorted to State Fair Park to begin the Christmas Parade.

West Allis Christmas Parade Lights Up the Night

The West Allis Christmas Parade is southeastern Wisconsin’s premier night-time Christmas parade, drawing over 5,000 spectators each year. The parade begins at the 81st St. State Fair Park entrance, proceeding east on Greenfield Ave.

Planning an event this complex takes a team of dedicated volunteers, who begin work on the event in summer. The West Allis Christmas Parade Committee selects a theme, with 2017 featuring “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree.” The committee organizes the event, recruits performers and additional volunteers, and fundraises to support the parade, which can cost up to \$18,000 to stage and is funded entirely by donations and sponsorships.

As the parade takes to the street, costumed characters entertain and delight the crowds lined along Greenfield Ave. Marching bands play familiar holiday music, while sparkling floats decked with glittering glide up the street. Camels and donkeys accompany the nativity float Epikos Church, 6229 W. Greenfield Ave., sponsors each year. In keeping with the “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” theme of 2017, this year’s parade will have a lively rock n’ roll spirit.



Tree Lighting and Community Sing 2016

One thing spectators will not see at the West Allis Christmas Parade is candy being thrown from floats. Dianne Eineichner, president of the DWABID and Christmas Parade Committee, shares why:

“Safety is our number one priority at the parade. A nighttime parade does come with some visibility challenges, and with large crowds, animals, floats and unpredictable weather, the last thing we want to risk is a child running into the parade route for a piece of candy and being injured. We want to ensure everyone stays safe and has a great time, so we ask our parade participants not to throw items into the crowd.”

As always, the parade ends with Santa and Mrs. Claus waving to the crowd as elves help collect children’s letters to Santa.

New Christmas Market Arrives for 2017

A new event joins the West Allis Christmas festivities this year. Mark Lutz, owner of the West Allis Cheese and Sausage Shoppe, 6832 W. Becher St., is bringing the first-annual Christmas Market to the West Allis Farmers Market grounds.

“This event will be very special and unique to the area,” says Lutz.

Inspired by open-air European markets, the Christmas Market will offer gourmet food and specialty gifts for sale, as well as live music, carolers, craft beer, and more. Christmas Market attendees can warm up with hot chocolate and Glühwein, a German mulled wine served warm. Cozy fire pits at the Market will let guests gather together to share conversation, food, and drink with one another. “We don’t know what the weather will bring, but a little chill is great for the Christmas spirit,” says Lutz.

Vendors selling handmade soaps, jewelry, ornaments, leather products, and unique gifts will offer their wares alongside local candy makers, spice and seasoning producers, and other specialty food retailers. The Christmas Market will provide guests a memorable experience in holiday gift shopping, with over 60 vendors expected to participate. The Christmas Market will be open on Friday, Dec. 1 from 4:30 - 9 p.m. and Saturday, Dec. 2 from 1 - 9 p.m.

“This event will be very special and unique to the area,” adds Lutz.

For more information about these events, visit www.westalliswi.gov.



West Allis Christmas Parade, 2016

Be Part of the Tradition: Join or Support the West Allis Christmas Parade

The West Allis Christmas Parade is supported entirely by donations and sponsorships from businesses and individuals who are passionate about keeping this event alive in the community.

Volunteers are needed to help make the parade memorable in 2017. Join the cast of characters entertaining crowds along the parade route, or be one of Santa’s elves and collect children’s letters to Santa as the parade moves along Greenfield Ave. Costumes and instructions are provided to all volunteers. Volunteers must be available on Friday, Dec. 1 in the evening to attend an orientation.

Sponsorships are available for as little as \$10, and all sponsorship levels include recognition on the City’s website. Sponsors at the \$1,000 level and up enjoy reserved seating for the parade, plus additional recognition opportunities.

To donate to the parade, learn more about sponsorships, or to volunteer, visit www.wachristmasparade.com

Santa’s Café Warms Hands and Hearts



Christmas in West Allis would not be complete without a visit to Santa’s Café, held in the City Hall Art Gallery. The West Allis Celebrations Committee will sell savory chili, comforting chicken noodle soup, delicious cookies, hot coffee, soda, and hot dogs to warm up guests. All proceeds from Santa’s Café go towards the Celebration Committee’s Veterans’ Fund, which provides opportunities to recognize and honor veterans for their service.

Santa’s Café is open to the public from 1 - 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 2.

Meet the Suburban Singers



"It's the most! Wonderful time! Of the year!"

The singers' voices swell and lift, singing the familiar holiday song on a Tuesday night in November. Behind a music stand, director Patricia Eby raises her eyebrows, exaggerates a smile, and leads in the altos, silently encouraging them to sing with joy as they enter with their part. The West Allis Suburban Singers, a community choir administered and supported by the West Allis-West Milwaukee Recreation and Community Services Department, are hard at work preparing for their Christmas concert.

"In a world of division and individualization, choir brings us together for the common purpose of sharing ourselves and our passion for music." - Patricia Eby

The Suburban Singers are a mixed chorus of men and women, ranging in age from young adults through seniors. The choir has been creating beautiful music for over thirty years, and is made up of both West Allis residents and non-residents, experienced singers and novices. University of Wisconsin Music Professor Emerita, Patricia Eby, is a recent transplant to West Allis from Fond du Lac and the Suburban Singers' new director. She joined the group in September.

"The opportunity to work with a community organization brings different rewards and challenges," notes Eby, who is also director of choirs at Mount Zion Lutheran Church in Wauwatosa. "Community choirs make a "community within a community" through singing. In a world of division and individualization, choir brings us together for

the common purpose of sharing ourselves and our passion for music with each other, and then sharing music with the larger community. It doesn't get much better than that!"

Suburban Singers member Casey Arnold agrees. "I've been heavily involved in music since I was ten years old, and I love being a part of the Suburban Singers because it gives me an outlet to continue singing," Arnold explains.

"This is a great group of people to spend Tuesday evenings with. There is serious music, there is fun music, and it's always a good time learning new things," she adds.

The Suburban Singers operate in a two-semester cycle annually. Fall semester typically begins in early September, and the spring semester begins in early January. The choir rehearses for three to four months in preparation for their concerts, meeting weekly on Tuesdays for two hours at West Allis Central High School.

Rehearsals begin with a vocal warm up and stretches to get the singers focused and ready to rehearse. Eby then works through the more difficult pieces of music early in the rehearsal, wrapping up with easier selections. "The songs we learn are a challenge in the beginning, but by concert time we are ready to entertain, and that's the reward of this program," says choir member Sherry Dobson.

The choir performs a diverse selection of music at their concerts. The Christmas concert will explore the story of the Nativity as the Suburban Singers perform seasonal music from Medieval through modern times. The concert will also include traditional holiday favorites, including an audience sing along of favorite carols. Familiar pieces to audiences include "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "Simply Having a Wonderful Christmas Time," and "Mary, Did You Know?" The Singers have been hard at work on some of the more difficult pieces since September. Members bring a wide range of musical backgrounds to the group; knowing how to read music is not required for members to join the choir.

"If you like to sing, can carry a tune, aren't afraid to hold a piece of music (whether or not you can read it), want to work hard, and

Join the Suburban Singers

The Suburban Singers' spring semester begins Tuesday, January 9. New singers are welcome. The spring concert will be held on Friday, May 4 at 7:30 p.m.

- Male singers are particularly encouraged to join.
- No prior musical experience is necessary.
- Rehearsals are held Tuesdays from 7 – 9 p.m. at West Allis Central High School.
- Music is provided.
- Choir members furnish their own dress for concerts.
- Membership fees apply.

Visit www.wawmrec.com/community_clubs/suburban_singers for more information.



Suburban Singers Director Patricia Eby



want to feel a sense of contributing to a community of singers, you're welcome to join the Suburban Singers," encourages Eby.

Laurene Bobadilla, who has been singing with the Suburban Singers since 1983, also encourages new singers to join the group. "I would invite anyone with a love for music to join us," she says. "Together, we learn, we reach out to our community, we enjoy each other's company, and we make ourselves and others happy with beautiful music."

The Suburban Singers Present: The Joyful Sounds of Christmas

Friday, December 8

7:30 p.m.

West Allis Central High School, 8516 W. Lincoln Ave,

Friday, December 15

7:30 p.m.

Mount Zion Lutheran Church, 12012 W. North Ave., Wauwatosa

Enjoy a live Nativity and caroling prior to this concert from 5 – 7 p.m.

Tickets are \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door (\$8 for seniors). Order online at www.wawmrec.com/community_clubs/suburban_singers

