



ISLANDER PHOTO BY EARL BRECHLIN

DECKING THE HALLS ... Kathy Woodside of Bar Harbor was among those decorating the Maine Sea Coast Mission's Colket Center on Monday in anticipation of the annual fundraising open house on Friday. She holds one of the unique wreaths that will be sold by silent auction.

Santa arrives Friday

By Robert Levin
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BAR HARBOR — The holiday season swings into full gear this Friday, Dec. 3, as Santa Claus touches down on the village green, ushering in the annual Village Holidays Celebration. A children's carnival, a holiday play and the ever-popular Midnight Madness sale are all set to follow.

Santa is expected to arrive downtown on a gleaming red fire engine at 5 p.m. Children and their families are invited to the village green as early as 4:30 p.m. to warm up with cookies and hot cocoa provided by Hannaford supermarket and Our New England Country Store.

After greeting children and lighting the Christmas tree in the gazebo, Santa and Mrs. Claus will ride the Polar Express train to the MDI YMCA. All are invited to follow. From 5 to 7 p.m. at the Y, there will be refreshments, activities and photos with Santa.

New activities this year include a craft table hosted by Cathy Higgins of Stone Soup toy store, and a contest hosted by the Christmas Spirit shop. The contest will match children from three age categories to create a picture of what Christmas means to them. A brand-new

artificial Christmas tree and \$50 gift card to the shop await the first place winners.

Children can also enjoy face-painting, ornament-making, cookies-decorating and writing letters to Santa. Santa himself will sit with children for photos, which can be picked up for free over the next couple of weeks at the Bar Harbor branch of Bar Harbor Bank and Trust.

The Polar Express, a scaled-down "train" owned by Bill Stewart of Mount Desert, will be running outside of the Y, and children can enjoy free rides around the athletic fields across the street.

At 7:30 p.m., a performance of the holiday classic, "Miracle on 34th Street," begins at the Criterion Theatre on Cottage Street. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$6 for children and senior citizens. More performances are scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 4, and for the following weekend in Northeast Harbor. For a full description of the play, see page 1 of section 2 of this week's *Mount Desert Islander*.

Downtown sidewalks are sure to be bustling for the 10th annual Midnight Madness sale, set to begin at 8 p.m. and last through midnight. A total of 33 stores will

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participate in the event, offering deep discounts to all, with even greater sale prices to those dressed in evening wear.

As part of the sale, House Wine, located on lower Main Street, will host a free wine tasting from 8 to 10 p.m. Plenty of downtown eateries will be open to provide sustenance for would-be shoppers.

The Bar Harbor Food Pantry will offer gift-wrapping during the sale. Pantry volunteers will set up at the Chamber of Commerce's information center on the corner of Cottage and Main Streets. Donations are recommended.

Also downtown on Friday, the

Maine Sea Coast Mission on West Street will be hosting its annual Holiday Open House fund-raiser and silent auction for wreaths from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The Midnight Madness sale presents a great opportunity to shop locally, which, in turn, contributes to a thriving community, said the chamber's Heather Jones.

"It supports our businesses, and we have a lot of new business here this year, and it would be great to see them continue to be a part of our community," she said.

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