

The 11th Annual Holiday Walk was again a tremendous success. Even Mother Nature delivered a beautiful, crisp winter night as a backdrop! As chair of the Topsfield Recreation Committee, it has been my privilege to work with such a dedicated group of people, whose commitment to community service is truly admirable. I want to thank all of the people who helped make this year's Holiday Walk a memorable event for our community.

Members of the Holiday Walk subcommittee included Matthew Beish, Melinda Doane, Ron Giovannacci, Laura & Steve Powers, Kathie Tremblay & Jackie White. I'm so impressed by their hard work and the positive energy and enthusiasm they bring to make this event so special.

The Recreation Committee continues to face the challenge of providing holiday lighting in the downtown area with limited resources due to cuts which eliminated all the funding from the town's budget for this effort. The Memory & Brownie tree lighting is a cherished tradition in our town that's worth preserving. The Parks & Cemetery Department again rose to the challenge. Steve Shepherd, Peter Miller and Paul Fontaine gave their time and effort to get the lights connected to power and working properly. Mayer Tree service again donated the use of their equipment to strip old, defective lights and replace with new energy efficient LED lights. We are also extremely grateful for the very generous donation from the Village Garden Club, which continues to work hard to preserve the Memory Tree lighting tradition.

Our community is so fortunate to have so many people who are interested in participating and improving the quality of any event that's hosted in our town. Among those very special and helpful volunteers are, Katrina Marchand, Michael Powers, Lauren Powers & Joe Geller who set up the Recreation Committee Headquarters and braved the cold weather to make and distribute free popcorn to all the Holiday Walkers; The Berube family who made delicious s'mores treats by their fire pit for our Holiday Walkers; Lyn & Tucker Mscisz and Mary Manning who beautifully decorated the area around Santa's Sleigh; The DiBlasi family who let us use their property to host the Live Nativity; the Nutter Family who donated a beautiful tree and the use of their antique sleigh for Santa; Brian Woodland who donated the use of the premises at Topsfield Station so the Congregational Church and the Council on Aging could have a venue; Dan Philpot for taking care of setting up that location with tables and chairs; Kathie Tremblay for bringing the beautiful "Ponydeer" who delighted the Holiday Walkers with her beauty and charm; the ABC Masco students for hosting a wonderful Open House. Thank you so much for all your hard work. Our community truly appreciates it!

The members of the adult Choirs from St. Rose of Lima and the Congregational Churches again joined forces to spread holiday cheer through music. At the Holiday Sing Along, hosted by the Congregational Church, this talented group was expertly accompanied by Mr. Joe Gibbons at the piano. The Masconomet High School Chorale, under the capable direction of Mr. Brian O'Cock, offered wonderful performances at the Memory Tree Lighting Ceremony and at the Library. This year, the Congregational

Church held its Holiday Concert at the end of the event to cap a wonderful night of celebration.

Heartfelt thanks also go to the Town of Topsfield employees who donated their time and effort to help make this event a success. The Fire Department got in touch with Santa and brought him to the downtown area in their Fire Engine, provided lighting, hot chocolate, cookies and help with the bonfire. The Highway Department put a lot of effort into building the bonfire. The pallets used in the bonfire were generously donated by Michael Verspirini and Jeff Masterson of Merrimack Valley Distributing. Again, this turned out to be a fantastic end to a wonderful evening and provided much needed heat on a cold, night. Council on Aging members Catherine Driscoll, Laura Keene, Betty Viator, Pauline Connelly, Pat Carroll, Linda Lord, John Connelly and Director Lydia Bertolino helped children make a wonderful holiday craft. The Police department patrolled the area and closed down the streets keeping the pedestrian traffic safe for all the Holiday Walkers. The Parks and Cemetery Department helped us with the lighting of the Memory and Brownie Trees and the transportation of Santa's sleigh. The Town Library opened its doors and provided entertainment and treats. The Topsfield Cultural Council's generous grant allowed us to bring DeLuna harpist, who played wonderful holiday music at the Corner Cafe. The Board of Health ran a very successful Flu Vaccination Clinic at the offices of the TriTown Council. We also appreciate the Topsfield Elementary School Committee and the Board of Selectmen for their continued support.

The downtown businesses did a great job of decorating their establishments and generously providing delicious treats and entertainment for the Holiday Walkers. Their offerings are one of the main attractions! The Holiday Pooch Pageant, sponsored by Danforth and Carey, was again a popular event this year. We thank the Sovereign Bank for their hospitality, allowing the Recreation Committee to set up our headquarters in front of their establishment and VIP Cleaners for providing power to the Recreation Committee Headquarters. We are grateful to Bernina Design who hosted the puppet shows offered by our puppeteer Judith O'Hare of You and Me Puppets. The Topsfield Fair provided the fun hay rides all night long and The Essex Coop donated and set up the pen used by Santa's "Ponydeer".

Congratulations to Jackie White who this year was honored by the Village Gardeners during the Memory Tree Lighting for her longtime service and dedication to the Library. Congratulations also to Joan Panella who this year joined Ardie Clark, Janet Brown, Darcy Fulton, and Martha Morrison as recipient of the 5th Annual Maryellen McGee "Pillar of the Community" Award for outstanding community service.

As you can see, it required a lot of hard work to make the Topsfield Holiday Walk a success. But those efforts don't compare to the enormous pride and joy everyone feels at seeing our neighbors, friends and family members enjoy themselves during this special evening. It is people like you, whose hard work makes Topsfield a better place for all.

Thanks to All, and Best Wishes for a Happy, Prosperous and Healthy New Year!

Steve Powers
Chairman, Topsfield Recreation Committee