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Contact: Jennifer Elving  
312/240-2813  
jennifer.elving@edelman.com

**ILLINOIS SETS THE STAGE FOR 2003 HOLIDAY SEASON**

*Dazzling light displays, ornamented zoos, annual parades and city celebrations usher in a festive yuletide*

**CHICAGO (November 3, 2003)** – Illinois offers a show-stopping lineup of favorite seasonal attractions, winter festivals and travel ideas to help make planning and enjoying the holiday season easier than ever.

**CHICAGO**

**Holidays at Marshall Field's** (November 8-December 31) treats visitors to the State Street store's famous animated window displays and a variety of free holiday fun. Known in previous years for window themes starring Paddington Bear, Harry Potter and The Grinch, this year's theme is "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory." Marshall Field's also hosts a public tree-lighting ceremony (December 8), visits with Santa Claus all season long and dining specials at the famed Walnut Room. For more information, call 312-781-4483 or visit [www.marshallfields.com](http://www.marshallfields.com).

Just down the street from Marshall Field's, the Goodman Theatre, rated by *Time* magazine as "The Best Regional Theater in the Midwest" (May 2003), hosts a holiday favorite, Charles Dickens' "**A Christmas Carol**" (November 22-December 27). For more information and ticket prices, call 312-443-3800 or visit [www.goodman-theatre.org](http://www.goodman-theatre.org).

The **Magnificent Mile Lights Festival** (November 22-23) kicks off North Michigan Avenue's free holiday festivities as Walt Disney World's *Mickey Mouse* and his Disney friends perform stage shows and lead a festive procession of entertainment down Michigan Avenue. Sponsored by the Tribune Companies, Greater North Michigan Avenue Association and Walt Disney, the event culminates with an evening illumination of more than one million lights, followed by a spectacular fireworks display. During the day, all eyes will be on WGN's Winter Walk area in Pioneer Court at 401 N. Michigan Ave., where carolers sing holiday tunes, InterContinental Chicago's ice-carving team buzzes through five tons of ice, and pastry chefs from Chicago's famed Eli's Cheesecake Company decorate a giant gingerbread house. Children can also decorate their own cookie creations and visit the holiday petting zoo. For more information, call 312-409-5560 or visit [www.themagnificentmile.com](http://www.themagnificentmile.com).

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Now in its 70<sup>th</sup> year, the **Chicago Thanksgiving Parade** (November 27) attracts more than 300,000 people to the festive lineup of gigantic balloons, marching bands, equestrian units and local celebrities. The parade marches along State Street from Randolph to Congress. For more information, call 312-781-5681 or visit [www.chicagofestivals.org](http://www.chicagofestivals.org).

The eighth annual **Christkindlmarket** (November 27-December 22) brings German Christmas tradition and international flair to Daley Plaza with a free, four-week, open-air market, modeled after the famous Nürnberg Christmas market of 1545. Visitors to the festival can enjoy schnitzel, potato pancakes, Gluhwein, pretzels and German beer, all while shopping for unique holiday gifts. Children can ride a merry-go-round or watch the annual Children's Lantern Parade (December 4). Christkindlmarket kicks off with the **90<sup>th</sup> Annual City of Chicago Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony** (November 27), officiated by Chicago's mayor who flips the switch to illuminate the 85-foot tree. For more information, call the German American Chamber of Commerce at 312-644-2662 or visit [www.gacom.org](http://www.gacom.org) or [www.christkindlmarket.com](http://www.christkindlmarket.com).

**Chicaglo** (December 1-31) is a series of unforgettable events composed of ethnic celebrations, holiday concerts, and indoor and outdoor activities for the entire family. Chicaglo's free "**All that Glitters**" bazaar (December 6 and 7) at the Chicago Cultural Center showcases holiday traditions from around the world with artwork from local artisans and cultural organizations. For families, the special "**Music is Good for Kids**" (December 6) event offers an interactive musical workshop. Theatergoers looking for laughter and an old holiday favorite can visit the Royal George Theatre for its rendition of "**What the Dickens!**" (Saturdays and Sundays, December 6-28). The production provides an evening of improvisation in a parody of Charles Dickens' classic works. For more information on the Chicago Cultural Center, call 312-744-6630 or visit [www.cityofchicago.org](http://www.cityofchicago.org); for the Royal George Theatre, call 312-988-9000; for Chicaglo events, call 877-CHICAGO or visit [www.877chicago.com](http://www.877chicago.com).

**Navy Pier's Winter WonderFest** (December 12-January 4) transforms Chicago's No. 1 tourist attraction into a winter wonderland of fun. Admission to the celebration is free, and the event offers ice skating, an indoor giant inflatable rock climbing wall, a children's craft area, and a variety of stages that provide nonstop holiday entertainment. For more information, call 312-595-PIER or 800-595-PIER, or visit [www.navy Pier.com](http://www.navy Pier.com).

The Chicago Children's Museum, located at Navy Pier, hosts its annual **Gingerbread Fantasy Factory** (November 28-January 11) exhibit that invites children of all ages to operate an assortment of gears, cranks and levers to make and decorate their own gingerbread cookie creations. In addition, adults can sit with their child in the Book Corner and read different versions of "The Gingerbread Man," work with the oversized foam gingerbread pieces to finish a

gingerbread house puzzle or act out the gingerbread story. For more information and admission prices, call 800-595-PIER or visit [www.navypier.com](http://www.navypier.com).

## **CHICAGOLAND**

Holiday shoppers won't want to miss St. Charles' **Holiday Homecoming** (November 26-December 31), a series of seasonal events, tours and offerings. Most notably, the annual **Christmastime at the Barn** (December 12 and 13) event held at the city's Fine Line Creative Arts Center features one-of-a-kind gifts from artisans statewide, horse-drawn carriage rides, and views of the picturesque streets of St. Charles adorned with lights and decorations. For more information and admission prices, call 630-513-5386 or visit [www.visitstcharles.com](http://www.visitstcharles.com).

**Holiday Magic at Brookfield Zoo** (November 28-December 21) sparkles with more than 500,000 lights, and brings holiday cheer with strolling carolers and local celebrity storytellers. Additionally, a special reindeer exhibit encourages guests to sing to the animals with Christmastime carols and participate in group sing-a-long sessions. For more information and admission prices, call 708-485-0263, ext. 879, or visit [www.brookfieldzoo.org](http://www.brookfieldzoo.org).

The Chicago Botanic Gardens in Glencoe becomes a "wanderland" with its **Celebrations! A Festival of Flowers, Light & Music** (November 28-January 4). The annual tree lighting starts the festivities (November 28) complete with holiday storytelling, ice sculpting, decorated gardens and seasonal displays, including a streetscape of doorways that offers ideas for unique holiday decor. For more information and admission prices, call 847-835-6900 or visit [www.chicago-botanic.org](http://www.chicago-botanic.org).

Visitors can tour the **Cuneo Museum and Gardens** (November 29-December 31) in Vernon Hills for a taste of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 1914 European villa offers visitors warm, homemade apple cider, a 10-foot lighted Christmas tree showcased in the Grand Hall and tours through 25 decorated rooms. Visitors can also take the self-guided driving tour through the **Holiday Festival of Lights** on the Cuneo grounds. The festival route includes lighted exhibits, with everything from Santa's sleigh to animated reindeer leaping over the road. For more information and admission prices, call 847-362-3042 or visit [www.lakecounty.org](http://www.lakecounty.org).

## **NORTHERN**

The **Ulysses S. Grant Home Lamplight Tours** (select days, November 28-December 14) in Galena are a unique and historic way to experience the holidays. Beginning at dusk, visitors can tour the former president's mansion led by costumed storytellers through lamp-

lighted corridors. For more information and tour prices, call 815-777-3310 or visit [www.granthome.com](http://www.granthome.com).

The **Ottawa Festival of Lights Parade** (November 28) kicks off the holiday season with nearly 100 parade floats and bands. Ottawa's mayor presides over an annual lighting ceremony at Washington Square and special holiday shopping hours are offered on Main Street. Additionally, free post-parade tours of the Reddick Mansion showcase Ottawa's historic appeal, while guests are also provided with refreshments and a bonfire. For more information, call 815-434-2737 or visit [www.ottawa.il.us](http://www.ottawa.il.us).

Rockford's **Festival of Lights** (November 31-January 1) offers driving tours that wind through Sinnissippi Park, aglow with dozens of lighted displays created by area businesses and community organizations. The tour also takes visitors to see the Rockford Community Holiday Tree at the Sinnissippi Gardens and the holiday lights display at the Erlander Home Museum. For more information and tour prices, call 815-963-5559 or visit [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com).

Elizabeth's free **Keeping Christmas** festival (December 5-7) provides visitors the sights, smells and sounds of an 1830s Christmas, complete with costumed interpreters. History lessons, walking tours of the Apple River Fort State Historic Site and exhibits in the separate Interpretive Center are also offered. For more information, call 815-858-2028.

## **CENTRAL**

**Christmas Time at the Dana-Thomas House** (December 3-31) in Springfield, showcases Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural gem decorated with turn-of-the-century holiday splendor. Tours are offered throughout December, and a silent Luminaria tour (December 21) features 850 candles alighting the home. For more information and tour prices, call 217-782-6676 or visit [www.dana-thomas.org](http://www.dana-thomas.org).

Taylorville kicks off its **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Home Tour** (December 5-7) showcasing seven homes and a town square decked with garland. One East Market Restaurant in town square serves visitors British high tea with sandwiches and scones, and also offers a vintage fashion show for entertainment. For more information and tour prices, call 217-824-2194.

Travelers to Lerna's Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site (December 12 and 13) can revisit customs of the 1840s and 1860s at a **Prairie Christmas**. Hands-on activities such as wreath- and candle-making, as well as live musical and theatrical mini-productions are also offered at this free event. For more information, call 217-345-1845 or visit [www.lincolnlogcabin.org](http://www.lincolnlogcabin.org).

## WESTERN

John Deere Commons hosts its seventh annual **Lighting of the Commons** ceremony (November 22). This free event showcases nearly 500,000 lights and fireworks as they brighten the Moline riverfront, while exhibits and craft festivities enchant families. Nearby, visitors can also enjoy trolley and carriage rides, seasonal musical performances, and visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus. For more information, call 563-322-3911, ext. 103, or visit [www.visitquadcities.com](http://www.visitquadcities.com).

The **East Peoria Festival of Lights 2003** (November 28-December 31) showcases one million twinkling lights illuminating 50 holiday displays around town, including Folepi's Marketplace, Holiday Sensations, the Enchanted Forest, and the Winter Wonderland. Local restaurants also offer travelers a break with holiday refreshments amid specially decorated Christmas trees. For more information and ticket prices, call 309-698-4711.

Illinois' rich heritage shines brightly in East Peoria at the **116<sup>th</sup> Annual Santa Parade** (November 28), the oldest holiday parade in the U.S. Band and float competitions make this procession one of the nation's best, while costumed characters entertain the crowd. Santa makes a special appearance at the parade and stays afterwards to visit with children. For more information, call 309-681-4711 or visit [www.peoriaevents.com](http://www.peoriaevents.com).

In honor of Saint Lucia, Queen of Light, the picturesque community of Bishop Hill becomes a glowing holiday village during the free **Lucia Nights** festival (December 12 and 13). Visitors can pay homage to this Sicilian martyr, who brought food to Sweden during its famine, as the town boasts festive lantern-lined sidewalks, candlelit windows in historic homes and a *cappella* choral performances. For more information, call 309-927-3345 or visit [www.bishophill.net](http://www.bishophill.net).

## SOUTHERN

The **DuQuoin City Celebration** (December 5-7) offers a variety of free family-oriented holiday activities, including tours and carriage rides. The **Christmas Stroll** guides visitors through the city streets on tours of cheerfully decorated homes, while carriage rides take them to Santa's backyard for children to share their holiday wish lists. Carolers wind through town singing holiday favorites and City Hall has a special **Festival of Trees** display with free refreshments. For more information, call 618-542-8338 or visit [www.duquoin.org](http://www.duquoin.org).

From Carbondale's Illinois Avenue to the town square, the **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Lights Fantastic Parade** (December 6), a lighted evening parade of 70 floats, marching units, clowns and bands,

opens the doors to holiday happenings throughout the city and Southern Illinois. For more information, call 618-529-4147.

Shoppers and crafts-fair enthusiasts won't need to look any further for holiday crafts than **Southern Illinois University's Holiday Crafts Fair** (December 4-6). Held at the campus' Student Center, this free event features more than 75 regional craftspeople and artists showcasing their holiday decorations and unique gift items. For more information, call 618-453-3636.

Metropolis is home to its own tours of holiday-decorated, landmark homes – from the Curtis House and Museum to a soldier's home at Fort Massac State Park. The 1870s Curtis estate is showcased at the **Annual Tour of Homes** (December 11-13), offering tea in the dining room and an opportunity to visit seven additional homes featured on the tour. For more information and tour prices, call 618-524-7203.

At the free **Olde Tyme Christmas** (December 11-13) celebration gathering on Fort Massac's campus, visitors are entertained by 18<sup>th</sup>-century Christmas reenactments, while the fort's decoration, period music and refreshments complete the event. For more information, call 618-524-9321.

## **SOUTHWEST**

Headlining Southwest Illinois' seasonal celebrations is Belleville's annual **Way of Lights Christmas Display** (November 28-December 31), ranked on the American Bus Association's "Top 100" events within Canada and the U.S. in 2002 and 2004. Held at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, the display features electro-art sculptures – a combination of electric light and glass – life-size figures of the Nativity scene and other displays depicting the Christmas story. The Christmas tree display is a must-see, especially during the area choir performances. Also at the Shrine, the **Las Mananitas Celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe** (December 13) highlights Mexican traditions with a serenade to Our Lady of Guadalupe and a Catholic mass in Spanish. Latino cuisine such as *pan dulce* (sweet bread) and hot chocolate are served afterwards. Entrance to the events are free and donations are accepted. For more information, call 618-397-6700 or visit [www.snows.org](http://www.snows.org).

Alton's second annual **Celebration of Christmas** (December 11-13) is just one of the free holiday events taking place in this Mississippi River town. Held in the Alton High School annex, the festival features lighted sculptures as envisioned by the city's children. On the same weekend, the **Olde Alton Arts & Crafts Fair** showcases the arts of more than 250 regional artisans. For more information, call 618-466-8858.

## **HOLIDAY TRAVEL**

The Illinois Bureau of Tourism offers free travel resources with additional information on holiday festivals, events and attractions statewide. All are available by calling **800-2CONNECT** to speak with an Illinois travel counselor or by visiting the bureau's Web site at **www.enjoyillinois.com**. The winter issue of *Illinois Now!*, a free, seasonal magazine devoted exclusively to travel in Illinois, will be available mid-November for holiday and winter travel planning. The magazine can be obtained by calling 800-2CONNECT or by visiting the bureau's Web site.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Statewide photography is available electronically or in slide format. For artwork, contact Jennifer Elving at 312-240-2813 or [jennifer.elving@edelman.com](mailto:jennifer.elving@edelman.com).

*The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Tourism  
manages industry efforts that result in sustainable and significant economic and  
quality-of-life benefits for Illinois residents*

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