



## December Musings from Lake County – Travels with **Father Christmas**

Who doesn't like the winter holidays, the bright decorations, the festiveness, the seasonal enjoyment that comes once a year? The Christmas season is a good time to celebrate in an endless variety of ways. Local communities are decked out in Holiday regalia. Tree lighting ceremonies dot the county landscape. I even know the **Farnpark** Santa Claus and marvel in the many stories he shares from the children who visit nightly. Yes, traditional toy requests and North Pole or reindeer questions occupy the majority of each visit but one to two times nightly the true meaning permeates the various colorful versions of

Christmas. *One child left Santa's sleigh after giving him a dollar to use for a gift for the poor and homeless. Another child asked that her gifts be given to someone in need. From these random acts of kindness resonates the true spirit of the holidays --- giving of oneself.*

I challenge you to celebrate the holidays in **a new way in 2020. That way is volunteering at a local non-profit.** The gift of time far exceeds any token monetary donation to a cause. Eighteen volunteers (*photo above*) cut and fabricate the 42,000 pieces and parts that go into Country Lights toy building each year. They start cutting in early March each year and work thru early December making memories possible. Other volunteers help the park system with trails, bike patrols, programming needs and more.

A local **lighthouse in Fairport Harbor** has approximately 10-12 dedicated volunteers who not only maintain, preserve and open the museum three days weekly in season but also educate the public on local history and maritime lore. In Concord Township, two volunteers maintain the **Old Stone School**, the county's oldest stone building -1840. Visitors can stop by during public hours or monthly events to witness living history.

Ann D. Is the local curator for the **Indian Museum** now located in Mentor. For more than 25 years, she and a few other volunteers keep our county Native American history alive. A few senior volunteers maintain the histories of **Willoughby, Willoughby Hills and Eastlake** in local community sites. The **Lake County History Center** on Riverside Drive in Painesville can always find a spot for another passionate volunteer.

Yes, there are only certain things you can see at Christmas. You can mix mulled wines with carolers singing, school pageants / concerts or church programming practically every night in December. Much of the way we celebrate Christmas in modern America was determined in the early 1800s in England. **The way we chose to celebrate the true meaning of the holiday season moving forward in 2020 can be in the form of the gift of time to a local non-profit in your hometown!**

Whether it be the British 'pantos' or simply Happy Christmas / Merry Christmas the wish for you is that 2020 may be your best year ever.

*St. Nicholas, Sinterklaas, Santa Claus, Pere Noel, Jules-Missen, Mos Cracium, Father Time, and Father Christmas*

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