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By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader Christmas break is less than two weeks away, and many may be wondering what their children are going to do with all of that free time. Ronna Stump and company at the recreation center don't intend to let the grass grow under the feet of local youth while school is out of session. The first seasonal event planned by the recreation center staff is the Silver Bell Walk/Run. Stump said the event should be enjoyable for all regardless of athletic capabilities due to the twist they have added to the contest.

"This is the first year we have done this," Stump said. "We will start signing up at 4:45 p.m. Saturday at Wendy's. Then the walk/run will begin at 5:45. It will start right there in front of Wendy's. The roads will be blocked off right before the parade. They will start running north, up to Eleventh Street, turn around and come back to the finish line at Third Street. "The contest is a prediction," she explained. "So, you have to predict how long it is going to take you do that. The one that comes closest to their prediction wins."

Prizes, Stump said, are yet to be determined. She added there will also be a prize for the runner that crosses the finish line first. To pay the entry fee, she said, participants have several options.

"The entry fee is going to be a cash donation or a bag of canned goods or nonperishable items," she said. "They will all be given to United Methodist Mexican American Ministries."

Hayrides have become a memorable seasonal activity Liberal residents have come to enjoy. Beginning Monday, there will be several chances to catch a ride and see many beautifully decorated homes throughout the city.

"The hayrides are always fun," Stump said. "We will be starting on Monday. We will be going on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday of each week until the last two rides on Dec. 20 and 21, which is a Monday and Tuesday.

"They start at 6:30 p.m. right outside of the recreation center," she explained. "The cost is \$2 per person and \$30 for a group of 20 or more."

Stump said she is not sure what the route will be just yet, but she will be scouting the city for some of the best decorated homes. She added that those interested in going on a hayride must

call ahead of time in order to reserve a seat.

The Parks and Recreation Department have enjoyed having a direct connection to the North Pole. Letters from Santa can be arranged by filling out a simple questionnaire.

“This has always been a fun activity,” Stump said. “We have a questionnaire that we let parents fill out. We just ask a few questions so we can make the letter more personal. We will ask about siblings, maybe pets and what the child wants for Christmas. The funniest one is when we ask if they have been particularly naughty or nice this year. There is a place for comments so Santa can say to maybe try harder in school or keep their room cleaned or something. It is just amazing how they straighten up when Santa tells to do so.”

Anyone wanting a letter mailed to a child out of town must have their questionnaire at the rec center by Dec. 17. After that date, letters can only be delivered in town.

Pancakes with Santa was a big success last year and Stump hopes this year will be just as fun, if not more.

“Pancakes with Santa is something we started brand new last year,” she said. “The International Pancake Board teams up with us. They come in and cook the pancakes, which is very appropriate for our city. You just come in and eat pancakes for free on Dec. 18 from 9 to 11 a.m.”

Stump added that Santa will be on hand for pictures and visiting. A picture with Santa will cost \$2, but visiting with him is free of charge.

The Christmas Carnival has also been a favorite event at the rec center over the years. Games, prizes and Santa always make for a fun afternoon for the kids, Stump said.

“The Christmas Carnival is on Dec. 11 from 1 to 3 p.m. here at the recreation center,” she said. “We will have all kinds of booths set up where you can play games and win prizes. Also, we will have more pictures with Santa if you want pictures. If you just want to visit with him, that is fine, too.

“We just ask people if they could pay \$3 to come in,” she continued. “That will help us out. We usually have 100 to 125 kids.”

Stump said volunteers to help with all events, especially the Christmas Carnival are always needed. Anyone wishing to donate their time or interested in information in regards to the rec centers holiday events may call 626-0133.

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