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Fox Hill Farm is set on 80.2 bucolic acres complete with a fabulous house, pool, pond, tennis court, barn, indoor and outdoor arenas plus a dressage ring, and cross-country course. The Archer & Buchanan designed home of 10,000 square feet represents the epitome of gracious country living. The 7 bedroom, 5.4 bath stone home features rare details like Italian marble floors and 200 year old wood floors from a French chateau. The workmanship in this home is spectacular! The large Kitchen features high-end appliances and marble counters. The Master Suite is really special! The Lower Level has a large Wine Cellar, Exercise Room, Theater, and Game Room. The Barn and Indoor Arena offer 27 stalls. Great equestrian community and located in the nationally ranked Unionville-Chadds Ford School District!

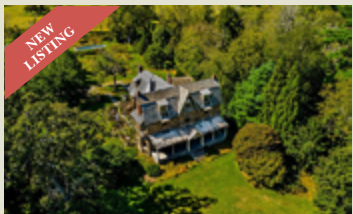
\$6,875,000



Bittersweet Drive | Pocopson Township

Set on 7.3 exceedingly private acres in Pocopson Township, sits this spectacular 18,000 square foot, tutor style home featuring a spectacular main level Master Suite with "His" and "Her" bathrooms, Walk-in Closets, a private Office, and a large Bedroom. The home boasts 5 Bedrooms, 8.3 Bathrooms plus a four room guest/in-law suite easily accessed by way of the home's three level elevator. The main level Living Room, Dining Room, incredible Kitchen, and stellar Family Room must be seen to be appreciated! All of the Bedrooms enjoy En-Suite Bathrooms. The Lower Level features an amazing Wine Cellar, Theater, Game Room and second Family Room. This fabulous property is located with easy access to Wilmington plus set in the nationally ranked Unionville-Chadds Ford School District!

\$4,995,000



Chadds Ford

The Happy Hill estate is set on a long, private road and its location guarantees privacy. The stately home is a well constructed Manor House featuring spectacular walnut moldings, stained glass, and museum quality mantels. Gardeners will love the Pennsylvania champion trees like Yellow Buckeye and Cucumber Magnolia. The property is a "diamond in the rough" as work is required to return the property to its former grandeur but the home's stellar location and great bones make it an excellent investment!

\$1,495,000



East Bradford Township

You must see these 23.1 beautiful acres that are perfect for an investor or someone seeking to build their dream home or farm! The land is high, level, open ground close to the Borough of West Chester. The property could be divided into a possibility of seven attractive lots. West Chester School District and convenient to shopping and major commuting routes. Please call us for a additional details.

\$1,085,000



Franklin Township

Hunt View, with its wonderful 4 BR, 3 BA home, is set on 7.9 private acres at the end of a long lane. The farm has a multi-stall barn, several pastures, and sits in a great community, blessed with a very private location. Only a short hack from the Peacedale Preserve, the White Clay Preserve and the Fair Hill Park.

\$750,000



Unionville Area

Set on 50 magnificent acres and surrounded on three sides by the members-only Laurels Preserve, sits a John Milner designed stone home overlooking a pond, plus a stunning bank barn, a three car garage, and an antique log cabin/guest house. This property represents the epitome of fine country living!

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from the
EDITOR

Welcome to peak holiday season! A hint of snow, aromas of chocolate, decorations festooning the streets.

West Chester comes alive with the glow of thousands of holiday lights. No parade, but so much to do. Read “West Chester Lights Up with 5 Enchanting Weekends of Holiday Fun.” And our publisher, Ed Malet, does some “Shopping Small and Local for the Holidays” as he visits shops in West Chester.

Other area towns have their own special celebrations. Lauren Durante and Gabriella Ruggirello tell what’s planned in “Happy Holidays at Home.” And find places to “Cut-Your-Own Christmas ‘Treedition.’”

Need inspiration for shopping? Check out what Marci Tomassone found in “Holiday Window Shopping,” plus Malcolm Johnstone’s “Choosing a One-of-a-Kind Gift” for gifting art, Matt Freeman’s “Knives Out This Season” for knives, of course, and Madison Meinel’s “Merry Fit-mas” for health and wellness ideas.

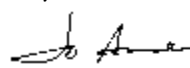
Want to give books or wine? Get ideas from Main Point Book’s Shelley Lawrence in “Season’s Gifting” and Fine Wine & Good Spirits’ Jessica Roberts’ “Happier Holidays Gift Guide.” And we preview local author George Rothaker’s latest book, *It’s a Wonderful Life 2060*, for a futuristic story with classic themes.

For more fun with alcohol, Brandywine Table’s Alyssa Thayer shares tips from Max Pfeffer, head distiller of Manatawny Still Works, in “Spirited Cooking.” Enjoy rum poached pears at home or share them as gifts.

Yay! Local theaters are back! People’s Light features an updated take on “A Christmas Carol.” Media Theatre gives us the crowd-pleaser “Mamma Mia!” Get your tickets and give some tickets.

As always, our Family Fun and Best Local Events pages bring you even more ideas for enjoying the holidays.

From all of us at *County Lines Magazine*, we wish you the Happiest of Holidays.


Jo Anne Durako
Editor



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18TH ANNUAL DINING GUIDE

Why We Love Local Dining
West Chester Dining • Dry January
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Farmers Markets in Winter



COUNTY LINES MAGAZINE

December 2021

Volume XLV Number 4

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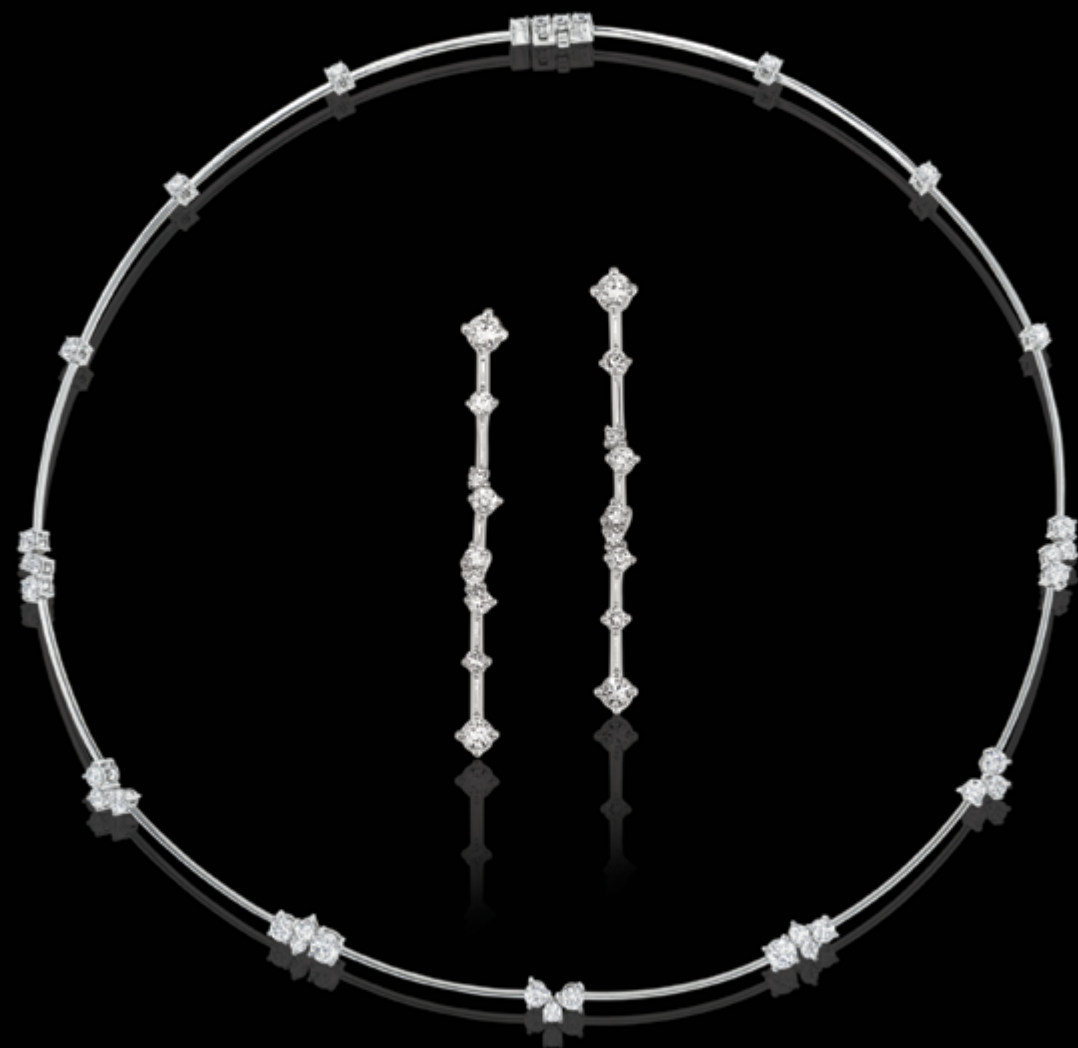
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[Good to Know]

Just a few things we'd thought you'd like to know this month

Santa's Helper. If you've seen the movie *Miracle on 34th Street*, you know the impact a good Santa can have on a community. Chester County had its own Santa from 1941 to 1984, when **Warren Mercer**, plaster worker by trade, transformed into good ol' Saint Nick, bringing joy to children and adults until he retired his red suit. From visiting hospitals to giving gifts to



climbing a fire engine ladder into former Mosteller's Department Store in West Chester, Mercer embodied the Spirit of Christmas. ChesterCoHistorical.org.

Advent Adventures. We all know the joy of revealing the sweet treats that lie behind those 24 doors, but chocolate isn't the only way to count down to the holiday. There's no limit to what can hide behind those mysterious doors. Find a toy or storybook **advent calendar** for the kiddos to look forward to. Adults can enjoy advent calendars, too, with surprises like beauty products, wine, tea, socks and much more! Today.com.



Shoe Candy. We expect presents under the Christmas tree, but what about presents in your ... shoe? That's a tradition in Germany on **St. Nicholas Day**, December 6th, marking the start of the Christmas season. Children leave out their shoes the night before and hope to wake up with candy or small presents to show they've been good. No need to wait until the 25th for all the fun. Leave a fresh-smelling shoe out on the 5th for St. Nick. SimpleMost.com.

Light It Up. The warm glow of lights on a winter night are a holiday staple. Find your glow this year at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens' **Winter Luminary Nights**, December 9th–12th from 5 to 8 p.m. The Arboretum will be aglow with luminary-lined paths and lit trees. Bundle up the family for a crisp lantern-lit walk down to the lake, then warm your hands on some hot beverages. \$25/member car; \$35/non-member car. 631 Berwyn Baptist Rd., Devon. JenkinsArboretum.org.



Borough's Bests. West Chester, well-known as a charming historic borough and home to 20,000, has been in the national rankings' spotlight. MoneyWise ranked it Pennsylvania's **Best City to Retire In**, Livability ranked it 49th among the **2021 Top 100 Best Places to Live**, and WalkScore gave the borough a **94 for walkability**. The rankings took into account factors including education, healthcare, housing and yes, walkability, highlighting this Chester County gem. MoneyWise.com, Livability.com, WalkScore.com.





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Nov. 26-28: Shop Small Business Weekend
Dec. 03-05: Old-Fashioned Holiday Weekend
Dec. 10-12: First Responders & Health Care Heroes
Dec. 17-19: 'Twas the Weekend Before Christmas!
Dec. 31: Ring in the New Year in WC!

See daily event details at www.gwcc.org











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December Picks Our Picks for top events this month

Afro-American Images 1971: The Vision of Percy Ricks

Through January 22

See a recreation of Percy Ricks 1971 exhibition of over 130 works of art by 66 African-American artists. This show includes most of the artists who had participated, many known locally. All indoor visitors 18 and over must be fully vaccinated against



COVID-19. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Wed., Fri.-Sun., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Thurs., 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. \$6-\$14. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

Night Forms: dreamloop by Klip Collective

Through February 27

Explore Grounds For Sculpture at Night Forms, a multi-sensory experience and a unique synthesis of video projection, light and sound that act as a bridge between technology and storytelling. As you make your way through the park, you'll have the chance to taste highlights from a themed

menu. 80 Sculptors Way, Hamilton, NJ. Timed tickets by reservation only. \$14-\$28. 609-586-0616; Grounds-ForSculpture.org.



Tinseltown Holiday Spectacular

November 26-January 2

An illuminated wonderland showcasing breathtaking light sculptures and displays powered by more than 1.2 million light bulbs. Guests will enjoy photos with Santa, a synthetic skating rink, holiday shopping, festive treats and seasonal beverages for all ages. Specialty tickets available for dog-friendly nights and sensory-friendly entry times. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks, 100 Station Ave., Oaks. Opens daily at 5 p.m. \$13.99-\$19.99. TinseltownHoliday.com.



The Nutcracker is Back!

December 10-31

Gather the family together to share the magic. Dec. 10-12, The First State Ballet Theatre performs at The Grand Opera House, Fri., 7 p.m., Sat. & Sun., 2 p.m. \$22.99-\$60, TheGrandWilmington.org. Dec. 10-31, the Philadelphia Ballet brings the magic to the Academy of Music, 240 S. Broad St., Philadelphia. \$10-\$25. 215-893-1999; PhiladelphiaBallet.org. Dec. 17-19 the Wilmington Ballet takes the stage at The Playhouse on Rodney Square, 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. 2 & 7:30 p.m. \$18-\$53. 302-888-0200; TheGrandWilmington.org. On Dec. 18 the Schuylkill Valley Regional Dance Company will be appearing at Bryn Mawr College, Goodhart Hall, 150 N. Merion Ave., Bryn Mawr. 2 & 7:30 p.m. \$15-\$20. SVRDC.org.



New Year's Eve at The Grand

December 31

Celebrate the New Year with a collection of musical talent from the Delaware Symphony Orchestra and OperaDelaware alongside Broadway's Tony Award-winner Brian Stokes Mitchell. Enjoy a program of traditional New Year's concert music, including some Viennese waltzes and polkas and the talents of Mr. Stokes Mitchell with a celebration of Broadway standards. 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. 7:30 p.m. \$155 per person includes a champagne toast. 302-652-5577; TheGrandWilmington.org.



best Things To Do

Many events are coming back, so take out your calendar and fill it in with fun. Please be sure to check websites often for the latest updates and for COVID protocols.

FAMILY FUN

THROUGH DECEMBER 19 Weekend Public Tours at Wolf Sanctuary of PA.

Gray wolves roam their natural landscape. Take a guided public tour to see the packs, hear their stories and learn about wolf conservation and biology. 465 Speedwell Forge Rd., Lititz. Res. req., \$13–\$15. 717-626-4617; WolfSanctuaryPA.org.

THROUGH DECEMBER
Morris Arboretum's Holiday Garden Railway. Display and buildings, decorated for the holidays with lights, are all made of natural materials. Morris Arboretum, 100 E. North-western Ave., Phila. Daily, 10 to 4. \$10–\$20. 215-247-5777; MorrisArboretum.org.



THROUGH DECEMBER
Science Saturdays at Hagley Museum & Library. Visitors of all ages are invited to discover solutions to science and engineering challenges. Science Saturdays are drop-in activities, so stop by during the event hours. 298 Buck Rd., Wilmington. Noon to 4. \$5–\$9. 302-658-2400; Hagley.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 14
Newtown Square Historical Society Hosts Holiday Readings and Model Train Set-up. Through Jan. 14, model train set-up of Newtown Square in the Upstairs Gallery. Wed, noon to 5; Sat, 11 to 5. Dec. 4 & 18, "A Cup Of Christmas Tea and other Holiday Readings," read by actress Ceil Graham, noon and 2 pm, res. required. Square Tavern, corner of Rt. 252 & Goshen Rd., Newtown Square. Free. 610-925-0290; NSHistory.org.

ONGOING
Behind the Steam: A Collection Exploration Speaker Series at Marshall Steam Museum. This month's virtual event takes a close look at a special item in the collection

and then Zooms out for a larger discussion with experts and enthusiasts. 3000 Creek Rd., Yorklyn, DE. 7 pm. \$5; \$30 for the year. 302-239-2385; AuburnHeights.org.

DECEMBER 3–5

Christmas Celebrations in Wayne. Dec. 3, Christmas tree lighting on N. Wayne Ave. with carriage rides, Santa arrives, 5:30. Dec. 4, Santa at the firehouse for pictures, 10 am. Dec. 5, Christmas caroling, hot chocolate and Santa with the Radnor Historical Society at the Finley House, 113 W. Beechtree Ln., Wayne. 5:30. WayneChristmas.com.



DECEMBER 4

Chester County History Center Hosts Breakfast with Santa. Children, and those who bring them, enjoy a hot/cold buffet breakfast and a gift from Santa (for ages 2–12). Registration required. 225 N. High St., West Chester. \$15. 610-436-9010; West-Chester.com.

DECEMBER 4

Coatesville Christmas Parade. Lively event with bands, floats, antique cars, cartoon characters and entertainment. Business Rt. 30, Strode Ave. to 11th St. Starts at 10 am. CoatesvilleChristmasParade.com.



DECEMBER 4 & 11

Railroad Museum of PA Holiday Programs. Christmas with the Conductor Story Readings—enjoy a special reading of a holiday classic story, Dec. 4, 10 am, Dec. 11, 2:30. Home for the Holidays—costumed actors, music, refreshments, 10 to 4. \$10. 300 Gap Rd., Strasburg. 717-687-8628; RRMuseumPA.org.



MORE HOLIDAY TRAINS

All Aboard the Holiday Trains! Be sure to check websites for restrictions due to COVID-19 and ticket info.

Colebrookdale Railroad. Through Dec. 23, 'Twas the Night Before Christmas Train. E. 3rd St., Boyertown. ColebrookdaleRailroad.com.

New Hope & Ivyland Railroad. Through Dec. 31, Santa's Steam Spectacular and the North Pole Express. 32 W. Bridge St., New Hope. NewHopeRailroad.com.

Strasburg Rail Road. Through Dec. 27, choose from Santa's Paradise Express, Night Before Christmas Train, Santa's Trolley or the Christmas Tree Train. 301 Gap Rd., Ronks. StrasburgRailRoad.com.

West Chester Railroad. Through Dec. 19, Fri–Sun, The Santa Express with live entertainment on board. Dec. 5 & 12, The Christmas Tree Train. 230 E. Market St., West Chester. WCRailroad.com.

Wilmington & Western Railroad. Through Dec. 19, weekends, Santa Claus Express. Dec. 10–30, Holiday Lights Express. Greenbank Station, 2201 Newport Gap Pk., Wilmington. WWRR.com.



HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

See also: Family Fun

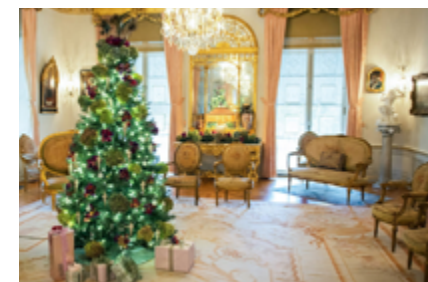
THROUGH DECEMBER 24

Christmas Village in Philadelphia. The authentic open-air German-style Christmas Market returns with thousands of lights and the delicious smell of waffles, gingerbread, bratwurst and mulled wine and lots of vendors. LOVE Park, 1500 Arch St., Philadelphia. Sun–Thurs, 11 to 7; Fri–Sat, 11 to 8. Phila.gov/Departments/Philadelphia-Parks-Recreation.



THROUGH DECEMBER 30

Holidays at Nemours Estate. The mansion is decked with elaborate table settings, floral displays beautiful Christmas trees, garlands, wreaths and many of the family's original ornaments. 1600 Rockland Rd., Wilmington. Tues–Sun, 10 to 5. \$5–\$30. 800-651-6912; NemoursEstate.org.



THROUGH DECEMBER 30

Yuletide at Wheatland. Historically costumed guides take visitors through the decorated mansion, imparting stories and histories about President Buchanan's public and personal life through the lens of Yuletides past. 1120 Marietta Ave., Lancaster. Wed–Sat, 10 to 3. \$8–\$17. 717-392-4633; LancasterHistory.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 2

Holidays on the Hill in Chestnut Hill. Philadelphia's Urban Village invites you to enjoy live music, horse-drawn carriage rides, an outdoor model train display, late-night shopping hours and Santa strolling the Avenue posing for pictures and handing out candy canes. Chestnut-HillPA.com.

THROUGH JANUARY 2

2021 Holidays in Historic Odessa, DE. The Wilson-Warner House will be adapted into scenes based on the classic novel *Little Women*. 201 Main St., Odessa, DE. Mon by res.; Tues–Sat, 10 to 4:30; Sun, 1 to 4:30. \$8–\$10. 302-378-4119; HistoricOdessa.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 2

Holidays at Hagley. The theme this year is "Home for the Holidays: A Celebration of Family." You'll enjoy tours, a Twilight Tour on Dec. 14, Gingerbread Competition (vote for your favorite), Santa and his elves work-

shop, photos and more. 298 Buck Rd., Wilmington. Daily, 10 to 4. \$4–\$8. 302-658-2400; Hagley.org.



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Janie McKirgan
Executive Director
The Jimmy Stewart Museum



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Local Farm Markets

Artisan Exchange, 208 Carter Dr. Unit 13 B, West Chester. Sat, 10 to 1. ArtisanExchange.net.

Bryn Mawr Farmers Market, Lancaster Ave. Bryn Mawr train station lot. Sat, 9 to 1. FarmToCity.org.

Downingtown Farmers Market, Kerr Park next to Veteran's Memorial, Pennsylvania Ave. Sat, 9 to noon. 610-836-1391; GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Eagleview Farmers Market, Eagleview Town Center, Exton. Thurs, 3 to 6. 610-836-1391; GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Kennett Square Farmers Market, The Creamery, 401 Birch St. Fri, 3 to 6. 610-444-8188; KSQFarmersMarket.com.

Lancaster County Farmers Market, 389 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne. Wed, Fri & Sat, 6 to 4. 610-688-9856; LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com.

Malvern Farmers Market, Warren Ave. & Roberts Rd. Sat, 9 to noon. 610-836-1391; 610-836-1391; GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Phoenixville Farmers Market, 200 Mill St. Sat, 10 to noon; seniors, 9-9:30. Curbside pick-up, if req. by Fri, noon. PhoenixvilleFarmersMarket.org.

Pottstown Farmers Mkt., 100 E. High St. Opening every other Sat, from May 15, 9-1. 484-948-6061; PottstownFarm.org.

Thornbury Farmers Mkt. & CSA, 1256 Thornbury Rd. Fri-Sat, 9-5; Sun, 11-5. ThornburyFarmCSA.com.

West Chester Growers Market, Chestnut & Church Sts. Sat, 9 to 1. Can pre-order. 610-436-9010; WestChesterGrowersMarket.com.

Westtown Amish Market, 1165 Wilmington Pk., West Chester. Thur, 9 to 6; Fri, 9 to 7; Sat, 8 to 4. 610-492-5700; WestChesterAmishMarket.com.

THROUGH JANUARY 2

Yuletide at Winterthur. Special holiday programs include live jazz performances, caroling and workshops. Visitors can enjoy live one-man



performances of *A Christmas Carol* by Gerald Charles Dickens, the great-great-grandson of Charles Dickens, wine and chocolate tastings and family events with Santa and Mrs. Claus. 5105 Kennett Pk. (Rt. 52), Winterthur. Mon-Sun, 10 to 5:30. Timed tickets required. \$6-\$20. 800-448-3883; Winterthur.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 9

A Longwood Christmas—Fire & Ice. Showcasing the dramatically beautiful contrast of fire and ice. Inside, trees are adorned in amber to fiery red tones complemented by icy-hued plantings, a "frozen" succulent fountain and an Alpine waterway. Outdoors, cozy up to inviting firepits, then stroll through half-a-million lights. 1001 Longwood Rd., Kennett Square. \$16-\$30. Timed tickets req. LongwoodGardens.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 9

Christmas in the Castle at Glencairn Museum. Journey through the 20th-century castle on a guided tour exploring the Pitcairn family holiday traditions featuring examples of Nativity art in the Glencairn collection. 1001 Cathedral Rd., Bryn Athyn. Reservations recommended. \$12-\$15. 267-502-2600; GlenCairnMuseum.org.

NOVEMBER 26, DECEMBER 4

Christmas on King in Malvern. *Nov. 26*, Tree Lighting Ceremony in Burke Park—enjoy this small town big charm event and help kick off the season, 6 pm. *Dec. 4*, shop King St. and enjoy Santa, music, food trucks, balloon artists and more as you find local treasures for everyone on your list. Noon to 4 pm. MalvernBusiness.com.

DECEMBER 3-5

Hay Creek Historical Assoc. Christmas at Joanna Furnace. A vintage Christmas celebration. Enjoy the Victorian decorations in this historic building, horse-drawn carriage rides, Christmas Market, bonfire, live Nativity and tours. Rt. 10, 3 mi. N. of Morgantown. Fri, 5 to 9; Sat-Sun, 4 to 9. \$10. 610-286-0388; HayCreek.org.

DECEMBER 4

57th Annual Christmas in Odessa Holiday House Tour. A self-guided walking tour of private homes and public buildings, many dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, decorated for the holidays. Sponsored by the Women's



Club of Odessa as a fundraiser for local student scholarships. 10 to 5. \$30. For tickets, 302-378-4900; ChristmasInOdessa.com.

DECEMBER 4 & 5

Brandywine River Museum Critter Sale. The Museum will be holding their annual Critter Sale at the Chadds Ford Historical Society's Barn Visitors Center this year. Stop by and purchase some cute critters hand-made by their volunteers. 1736 Creek Rd., Chadds Ford. 10 to 4. See their website for more details. 610-388-7376; ChaddsFordHistory.org.



DECEMBER 4 & 5, 10, 11 & 12

Kennett Square for the Holidays. *Dec. 4 & 5, 11 & 12*, Holiday Village Market—enjoy artisan and vintage vendors, live music, ice sculpture demonstrations, food trucks and more at The Creamery of Kennett Square, 401 Birch St. 11 to 5, KennettHolidayVillage.com. *Dec. 10*, Tinsel on the Town—tree lights and holiday decor surround shoppers strolling State Street, 4:30 to 9. HistoricKennettSquare.com.

DECEMBER 5

Historic Pottstown Holiday Tour. Kick off the season with this historic house tour, featuring homes in the heart of Pottstown's Historic District and a Trolley Tour. 1 to 5. \$20-\$50. PottstownGoFourth.com.

DECEMBER 8

Luminaria Shopping Night. A night of shopping illuminated by the soft glow of holiday luminaria. PhoenixvilleFirst.org.

DECEMBER 11

Downingtown Christmas Parade. Get in the holiday spirit and follow the parade through town. Business Rt. 30 (Lancaster Ave.) between Hunt Ave. & Rt. 113, Downingtown. 3 pm. DTownChristmas.com.

DECEMBER 11

20th Annual Spirit of Christmas and a Dickens Experience in New Castle, DE. Enjoy a full day of concerts, free house tours, crafts, refreshments and Christmas Spirit. 50 E. Market St., New Castle, DE. 10 to 5:30. Free. 302-328-3279; NewCastleHistory.org.

The Holidays in Annapolis



The lights are up and the festivities await. Head down to Annapolis for a day ... or longer.

Through December 26

A Christmas Carol
The Classic Theatre of Maryland
1804 West St.

Through January 2

SPCA Lights on the Bay
1815 Bay Ridge Ave.

November 27

Small Business Saturday
throughout downtown Annapolis.

November 28

Grand Illumination Tree Lighting
25 Market Space.

November 28

Artists Sunday in Annapolis
along West St., (between Church Circle and Calvert St.)

December 2, 9, 16

Midnight Madness
historic downtown Annapolis, Main St., West St., Maryland Ave.

December 4

Hanging of the Greens, Annapolis Jaycees, along Main St. and West St.

December 5

Annapolis Chocolate Binge Festival & West Street Grand Illumination
along West St. (Between Church Circle and Calvert St.)

December 11

Eastport Yacht Club Lights Parade
along the Annapolis waterfront, at the head of the harbor, beside the City Dock.

December 11

Kwanza Celebration
Banneker- Douglass Museum
84 Franklin St.

December 11

A Dutch American Christmas
Hammond Harwood House
19 Maryland Ave.

December 11, 12, 18, 19

The Nutcracker
Maryland Hall, 801 Chase St.

December 18

A Very Merry Drag Brunch
Rams Head, 33 West St.

DECEMBER 11
18th Annual Firebird Festival in Phoenixville. Festivities start downtown with music and entertainment from 4 to 6. Then at 6:30 the procession leaves from downtown to arrive at the firebird site around 7 pm, and the lighting of the Phoenix happens at 8 pm. Veteran's Memorial Park, 192 Mowere Rd. 5 to 10 pm. Firebird-Festival.com.

DECEMBER 12
Pottsgrove Manor's Outdoor Frost Fair. Discover the world of an 18th-century winter market with living history demonstrations, popular games, 18th-century brewing, gingerbread making and much more. Free visitor parking at Pottstown Memorial Park, 75 W. King St., Pottstown. A free shuttle available to take guests to Pottsgrove Manor. 11 to 5. \$2 donation. 610-326-4014; MontCoPa.org.

ART, CRAFTS & ANTIQUES
THROUGH DECEMBER 31
"Island Life: Photography by Jay Fleming,"
Historic Odessa Foundation Exhibit. A look at Chesapeake Bay's last two inhabited offshore islands—Smith and Tangier—documents the way of life that has been shaped by hundreds of years of isolation. Historic Odessa Foundation Visitors Center, 201 Main St., Odessa. Tues–Sat, 10 to 4:30; Sun, 1 to 4:30. HistoricOdessa.org.

THROUGH FEBRUARY 22, 2022
Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience. A 360-degree "art event" with 60 projectors bringing 200 of Van Gogh's masterpieces to life with projections that animate the floor and walls around visitors, creating an immersive experience. Tower Theater, S. 69th & Ludlow Sts., Upper Darby. Mon, Wed–Fri, 10 to 7; Sat, Sun and holidays, 9 to 9. Tickets \$19.90–\$54.50. VanGoghExpo.com.



THROUGH JANUARY 30
Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital Art Ability Exhibit & Sale. Artists from around the world with physical and cognitive disabilities submit their work to this juried exhibition and sale. 414 Paoli Pl., Malvern. Free. Visit website for more info. 484-596-5710; MainLineHealth.org/ArtAbility.

DECEMBER 3–11
Community Arts Center's Holiday Sale of Fine Craft & Pottery. Featuring handmade work by members of the Potters Guild and other local vendors. 414 Plush Mill Rd., Wallingford. Mon–Fri, noon to 7; Sat, 10 to 5; Sun, noon to 5. Free. 610-566-1713; CACHolidaySale.org.

DECEMBER 4 & 5
9th Annual Arts Festival Reading & Holiday Market. Juried artists from across the country and studio artists from GoggleWorks, along with food, music, kids' programs and live artist demonstrations. 201 Washington St., Reading. 10 to 5. Free. Pre-register for this show. 610-374-4600; Goggleworks.org.

DECEMBER 4–12
Yellow Springs Art Show Poster Competition Exhibition & Members Art Show. Artists have been invited to submit work representing



Yellow Springs. One will be chosen to represent the 2022 Art Show. All entries are for sale. Lincoln Building, 1685 Art School Rd., Chester Springs. Daily 10 to 4. Free. 610-827-7414; YellowSprings.org.

DECEMBER 4–JANUARY 29
CraftForms 2021 at Wayne Art Center. An international juried exhibition of contemporary crafts. *Dec. 3*, Opening Gala, 6 to 10. Wayne Art Center, 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne. See website for hours. 610-688-3553; WayneArt.org.

BOOKS.....
DECEMBER 2
Wellington Square Bookshop. Non Fiction Book Club: Holiday Book Swap, 7 to 9. 549 Wellington Sq., Exton. 610-458-1144; WellingtonSquareBooks.com.

DECEMBER 2
Reads & Company. Brené Brown, author of "Atlas of the Heart" holds a virtual book launch on Zoom. Visit website for more information. 234 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 8 pm. 484-920-3695; ReadsAndCompany.com.

DECEMBER 2, 14
Main Point Book Club via Zoom. Non Fiction Book Club: *Dec. 2*, "The Book of Delights" by Ross Gay, 7 pm. *Dec. 14*, "The Women in Black" by Madeleine St. John, 1 pm. 116 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne. 484-580-6978; MainPointBooks.com.

DANCE.....
For "The Nutcracker," see December Picks.

DOG SHOWS
DECEMBER 8–12
Valley Forge Kennel Club Dog Show. The annual celebration of dog sports including a dog show each day. The weekend's activities include obedience and Rally competitions. The Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks. Daily 8 to 5. ValleyForgeKC.org.

FILM
DECEMBER 6, 13, 20
Movies at Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center. *Dec. 6*, "Silverado," *Dec. 13*, "It's a Wonderful Life," *Dec. 20*, "Lars and the Real Girl." 226 N. High St. 7 pm. \$5. 610-356-2787; UptownWestChester.org.

DECEMBER 11–19
Holiday Movies at The Colonial Theatre. Get into the spirit with these classics. *Dec. 11*, "Elf," *Dec. 12*, "White Christmas," *Dec. 18*, "A Christmas Story," *Dec. 19*, "It's a Wonderful Life." 227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 1:30. \$6–\$10. 610-917-1228; TheColonialTheatre.com.

FOOD & BREWS
DECEMBER 4
Valley Forge Beer & Cider Festival. Popular local breweries and cideries will be on hand



as well as producers from across the country. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks. Gen. adm.: 12:30 to 4 and 6:30 to 10, \$50 online in advance, \$60 on the day. VIP: noon to 4 and 6 to 10, \$60 online, \$75 on the day. ValleyForgeBeerFest.com.

FUNDRAISERS
THROUGH MARCH 31
Notable Kitchen Tour & Chef's Tastings. Held virtually this year and features Tabletop Art via Facebook. Designers offer useful tips and visuals

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<p>Clue ON STAGE MAY 14 - JUNE 24</p>	<p>SWEET CHARITY JUL 16 - AUG 28</p>
<p>MEMPHIS SEPT 17 - OCT 30</p>	<p>WHITE CHRISTMAS THE MUSICAL NOV 18 - DEC 23</p>

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DECEMBER 1 & 2
Women's Committee of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Holiday Boutique. The finest boutiques participate to benefit CHOP. Merion Cricket Club, 325 Montgomery Ave., Haverford. Preview Wed, shopping and hors d'oeuvres, 5 to 9, \$150; Thurs, 9 to 5, lunch available, \$10 (\$35 for shopping and lunch). 267-426-6498; CHOPHolidayBoutique.org.

DECEMBER 4
2021 West Chester Charity Ball. Celebrating 33 years of holiday tradition with dinner, music, dancing, auctions and more. Join Chester

County residents and businesses in the effort to end homelessness in the community. West Chester Golf & Country Club, 111 W. Ashbridge St., West Chester. 6 pm. For tickets, 610-431-3598; FriendsAssoc.org/Charity-Ball.

JANUARY 20
A Taste of Phoenixville. Mark your calendar for this 20th Anniversary event of premier food, wine, beer and live music. Benefits Good Samaritan Services. Franklin Commons, 400 Franklin Ave., Phoenixville. 6 to 10. Visit website for tickets. 610-933-9305; TasteOfPhoenixville.com.

MUSEUMS
THROUGH FEBRUARY 6
Delaware Art Museum. *Through Jan. 2*, "Fantasy and the Medieval Past," *Through Feb. 6*, "I Sit and Sew: Tracing Alice Dunbar-Nelson." 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Wed, 10 to 4; Thurs, 10 to 8; Fri-Sun, 10 to 4. \$6-\$12, Sun, free. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

THROUGH JULY
Tour the Marshall Mansion at Auburn Heights. Explore one of the best examples of a Queen Anne style Victorian mansion at the former home of the Marshall family. 3000 Creek Rd, Yorklyn, DE. Thurs & Fri, 1 pm. \$7-\$14. 302-729-4280; DEStateParks.com.

MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT
THROUGH DECEMBER 10
The Grand is Back! *Dec. 3*, "A Swingin' Little Christmas" with Jane Lynch, Kate Flannery, Tim Davis and the Tony Guerrero Quintet; *Dec. 10*, "December '63" Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons tribute; *Dec. 17-19*, "The Nutcracker," see *Dance*. 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. Times and tickets, 302-652-5577; TheGrandWilmington.org.



THROUGH JANUARY 8
Kennett Flash. *Dec. 2*, Sarah Borges and The Broken Singles; *Dec. 4*, LaRue, Alexander,

Romaine—L.A.X.; *Dec. 5*, Chris Smither; *Dec. 10*, The Hypothetical House Band—Jon Herington and Dennis Espantman; *Dec. 15*, Heather Maloney; *Jan. 8*, Total Mass Retain—A Tribute to Yes. 102 Sycamore Alley, Kennett Square. For times and tickets, 484-732-8295; KennettFlash.org.

DECEMBER 5, JANUARY 9
Sunday Spotlight at Opera Delaware. Afternoon recitals with some of your favorite artists. *Dec 5*, Jennifer Zetlan and Aurelien Eulert; *Jan 9*, Eric McKeever and Aurelien Eulert. Opera-Delaware Studios, 4 S. Poplar St., Wilmington. 2 pm. \$35. 302-442-7807; OperaDE.org.



DECEMBER 5
DE Art Museum Jazz Show in Collaboration with African American Artist Collective. The Wayne Morgan Band performs. These jazz performances pay homage to the many artistic disciplines brought together under Percy Rick's vision, see *December Picks*. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. 1:30 pm. \$15. 302-571-9590; DelArt.org.

DECEMBER 5
Delaware County Symphony Concert. "DCS Through the Years," featuring the music of Brahms, Johann Strauss II, Rimsky-Korsakov and more. Neumann University, Meagher Theatre, 1 Neumann Dr., Aston. 3 pm. \$20. 610-879-7059; DCSMusic.org.

DECEMBER 5-19
Vox AmaDeus Holiday Performances. Handel's *Messiah*, *Dec. 5*, Daylesford Abbey, 220 S. Valley Rd., Paoli; *Dec. 19*, St. Katharine of Siena Church, 104 S. Aberdeen Ave., Wayne. Renaissance Noël, *Dec. 12*, Church of the Good Samaritan, 212 W. Lancaster Ave., Paoli. Visit website for times. \$10-\$25. VoxAmaDeus.org.

DECEMBER 18
Schuylkill Valley Regional Dance Company 50th Anniversary Nutcracker Ballet. See *December Picks*.

THEATER
THROUGH DECEMBER 19
Saturday, Sunday

Delaware Children's Theatre Presents Disney's Frozen, Jr. Take the family into this spellbinding winter wonderland with Elsa and Anna. 1014 Delaware Ave., Wilmington. 2 pm. \$16-\$20. 302-655-1014; DEChildrensTheatre.org.

THROUGH DECEMBER 22
A Christmas Carol By Candlelight. A reimagining of Dickens *A Christmas Carol* followed by a Christmas musical concert and a wonderful dining experience. Visit website for show times and Covid protocols. The Candlelight Theatre, 2208 Millers Rd., Wilmington. \$33-\$65.50. 302-475-2313; CandlelightTheatreDelaware.com.



THROUGH DECEMBER 24
A Christmas Carol at Hedgerow Theatre. The family classic and Delaware Valley tradition. 64 Rose Valley Rd., Rose Valley. See website for times and tickets. 610-565-4211; HedgerowTheatre.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 1
The Christmas Tree Ship at Bird-in-Hand Stage. A ship. A storm. And a Christmas tale of heroic proportions. 2760 Old Philadelphia Pk., Bird-in-Hand. \$39. Check website for times. 800-790-4069; Bird-in-Hand.com/Stage.

THROUGH JANUARY 2
Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella at The Fulton Theatre. An enchanted time at the ball with a lush production, graceful dance and a contemporary take on one of the most romantic stories ever told. 12 N. Prince St., Lancaster. Times and tickets, 717-397-7425; TheFulton.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 2
A Christmas Carol at People's Light. See article in this issue.

THROUGH JANUARY 16
Mamma Mia! at Media Theatre. See article in this issue.

DECEMBER 1-19
Million Dollar Quartet at Delaware Theatre Co. Inspired by the famed recording session that brought together rock 'n' roll icons Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins for one of the greatest jam sessions ever. Relive that legendary night. For tickets and times, 302-594-1100; DelawareTheatre.org.

DECEMBER 4-5
Summer: The Donna Summer Musical at The Playhouse on Rodney Square. With a score featuring more than 20 of Summer's classic hits including "Love to Love You Baby," "Bad Girls" and "Hot Stuff," this electric experience is a moving tribute to the voice of a generation. 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. \$48-\$88. 302-888-0200; TheGrandWilmington.org.



DECEMBER 4-24
Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Jr. at Media Theatre. A musical adaptation of the beloved television special. 104 E. State St., Media. See website for times. \$17-\$22. 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org.

TOWNS, TALKS & TOURS
DECEMBER 2-11
Lancaster County's 12 Shops of Christmas Tour. A unique shopping adventure featuring 12 off-the-beaten-path shops, two cafes and a creamery. For tickets and tour booklet, phone 717-721-9409; BestKeptSecretsTour.com.

DECEMBER 3, 11, 16
1st Fridays, 2nd Saturdays, 3rd Thursdays. First Fridays: *Dec. 3*, Lancaster City, 717-509-ARTS; VisitLancasterCity.com. Oxford, 610-998-9494; DowntownOxfordPA.org. Phoenixville, 610-933-3253; PhoenixvilleFirst.org. West Chester, 610-738-3350; DowntownWest-Chester.com. Wilmington Art Loop, 302-576-2135; CityFestWilm.com. Second Saturday Virtual Arts Stroll: *Dec. 11*, Media, 484-445-4161; MediaArtsCouncil.org. Third Thursday Malvern Stroll: *Dec. 16*, MalvernBusiness.com.

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Send a description of your activity to Info@ValleyDel.com by the first of the month preceding publication.

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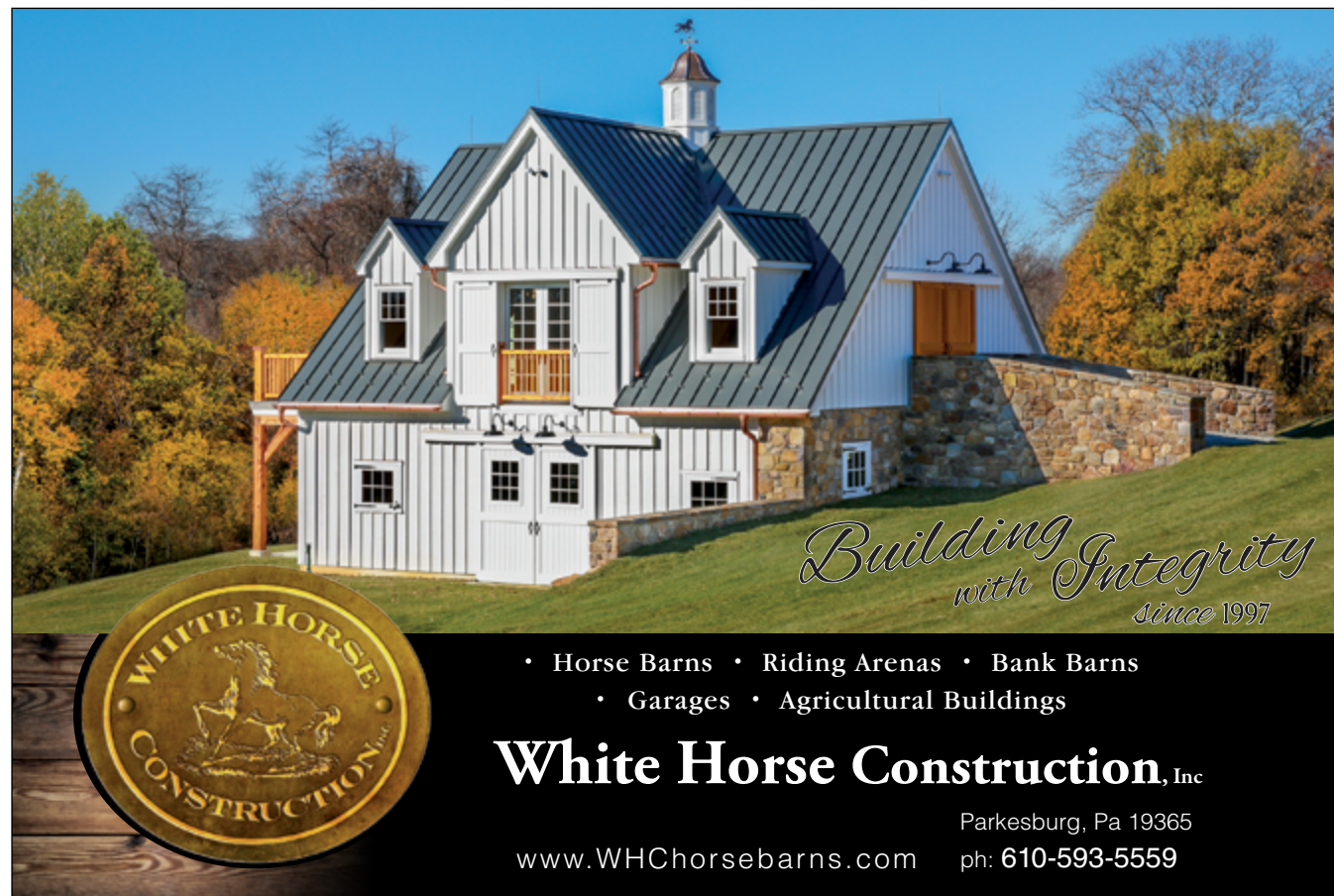


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It's (Still) a Wonderful Life

75 YEARS LATER, THIS HOLIDAY CLASSIC IS GETTING A FRESH NEW TAKE

Rachel Thompson

NOTHING CONJURES UP THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT like lounging on the sofa in your most festive Christmas pjs, sipping a steaming cup of cocoa (extra marshmallows, please) and watching a holiday movie marathon on TV.

And as any Christmas movie fanatic knows, the holiday season isn't complete without a viewing, or two, of Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. This American classic withstands the test of time through powerful messages on family, greed, integrity and ambition—all of which seem extremely fitting during the Christmas rush and holiday madness.

To celebrate 75 years of *It's a Wonderful Life*, local author and artist George Rothacker is revisiting the film's message in a futuristic setting in his latest novel, *It's a Wonderful Life 2060*. Rothacker transforms the black and white film into a science fiction story filled with holograms, robots and artificial intelligence, while staying true to the original themes of preserving relationships and appreciating your blessings.

The novel focuses on a George Bailey-esque character (played by Jimmy Stewart in the original film) named Juniper Blakely in the 2060 version. Juniper dreams of building the most complex model train layout ever imagined. Along the road to his dream, he veers off in a direction that blends technology into the story by developing life-like robotic characters to populate his model train layout of Bedford Falls—the movie setting of *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Through a series of life-changing and eye-opening experiences, Juniper realizes happiness in life isn't about the amount of money you have or the things you own. Instead, it's about being close to those you love and following your passions.

"Ambition, greed and dishonesty can turn a whole life sour, while making and keeping relationships are riches one can't buy," explains Rothacker. He hopes the themes of the film are evident in the novel's fresh take on the story.

This isn't Rothacker's first Jimmy Stewart-inspired venture. Anyone who's visited the Jimmy Stewart Museum in Indiana, Pennsylvania may recognize the posters, Christmas cards and ornaments in the Museum gift shop depicting Rothacker's painting "First Snowfall."

That painting was a collaborative project with the Museum back in 2002 and features the local Indiana Theater at night bedecked in



Rothacker's painting "First Snowfall"

snow, with buildings trimmed with lights and large bells reminiscent of the fictional town of Bedford Falls.

Rothacker has worked with the Jimmy Stewart Museum ever since. He's contributed other projects including a painting of Stewart's boyhood home, a new poster for *It's a Wonderful Life* and a biographical film documentary of Stewart titled *Always Be Nice to People*.

All of these projects have led to his latest venture, *It's a Wonderful Life 2060*. "[The book] is not just about history, classic films and model trains, but is a story about how tenacity, moral courage, hard work and dedication to duty are universal guideposts that can lead every generation to a sense of purpose, dignity and fulfillment," Rothacker says.

Whether looking back on the past or gazing towards the future, it's clear that *It's a Wonderful Life's* legacy will continue to reach generations to come, especially with a nudge from Rothacker's new adaptation.

This holiday season, skip the movie marathon for a weekend and curl up by the fire with a copy of *It's a Wonderful Life 2060*. And don't forget to order copies for friends and family to find under the tree on Christmas Day. ♦

The Jimmy Stewart Museum, 835 Philadelphia St., Indiana, PA. Jimmy.org/store. Signed copies of It's a Wonderful Life 2060 are available for order at the Museum and at other booksellers.



A Brand-New Adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*

AT PEOPLE'S LIGHT, NOVEMBER 20 – JANUARY 2, 2022



CALLOUS SCROOGE, SHACKLED MARLEY AND the haunting spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future spring vividly to life in People's Light's world premiere adaptation of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Featuring a vibrant mix of original songs and newly arranged traditional carols, this music-infused retelling captures the magic, joy and generosity of the beloved classic in a whole new light.

People's Light Producing Director Zak Berkman, who adapted the production, composes the music in collaboration with Music Supervisor and Arranger Mitch Chakour—a “musician's musician” who's toured with the likes of B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt and Joe Cocker. Though inspired by 19th-century English folk, the compositions and arrangements are layered with more contemporary sensibilities, creating a familiar, yet unique holiday sound. Get a sneak peek of the tunes online at PeoplesLight.org!

When first published, the full title of Dickens' novella read *A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*. Berkman subtitles his adaptation *A Ghost Story of Grief & Generosity*, a nod to the original, but illustrative of his fresh take on the holiday classic. At the top of the play, audiences are greeted by a “Kind Chorus” of traveling spirits, preparing to perform Scrooge's story of greed, grief and redemption for today's audiences.

“Like the ghosts who visit Scrooge, our production is a dialogue between the past, present and future,” says Berkman. “Developed throughout 2020 and 2021, this is a *Christmas Carol* for now—the themes of loss, generosity and the collective good resonate more than ever in our COVID-altered world. I'm hopeful newcomers and die-hard fans alike will delight in the Dickensian elements so many of us know and love, but also experience something new and surprising.”

Helmed by director David Bradley, this world premiere adaptation features a multi-talented, multi-generational cast of almost 20—from our own backyard to Broadway—led by Ian Merrill Peakes as Ebenezer Scrooge through December 23.

People's Light regulars should note this season's holiday offering is not a musical panto (a longtime tradition), but it is music-filled, interactive fun for every age—whether you believe in spirits or not. ♦



Ian Merrill Peakes

IF YOU GO

What: *A Christmas Carol*

Where: People's Light, Leonard C. Haas Stage, 39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern

When: November 20 to January 2

More Info: 610-644-3500; PeoplesLight.org

MAMMA MIA!

Sophie spent her whole life without a father ... and then three arrive.

JOIN THE MEDIA THEATRE FOR THE FIRST PERFORMANCE in its 2021–2022 season with Broadway's longest-running musical, *Mamma Mia!* Playwright Catherine Johnson and ABBA band members Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus wrote this Grammy and Tony-nominated musical, inspired by the hits of ABBA.

An instant success, this musical premiered in 1999 and has been performed in over 40 countries and was adapted to the big screen in 2008. Remember Meryl Streep singing? There's even a sequel!

Mamma Mia! tells the story of Sophie and her former hippie mother, Donna, who live together in a crumbling, failing hotel built on a Greek island paradise. Sophie spent her whole life not knowing her birth father and decides impulsively to send letters to her mother's past lovers, inviting them to Sophie's upcoming wedding.

Drama, hilarity and revelations ensue to the tune of an ABBA soundtrack when Sophie's three possible fathers arrive on the island, to the surprise of Donna and Sophie's fiancé, Sky.

It's no surprise this incredibly popular musical is playing at Media Theatre, nationally known for its live orchestra and musical talent. The only professional theater in the Brandywine Valley, it's won 86 Broadway World Awards for ‘Best of Philly Theatre’ from 2012–2017, among other achievements. Since 1994, Media Theatre has been giving people of the Brandywine Valley a Broadway experience without the stress of going into the city.

See *Mamma Mia!* in its original form—on the stage! We dare you to go and not leave singing. ♦

– Maria Marabito and Lindsey Miller



IF YOU GO

Where: The Media Theatre
104 E. State St., Media

When: November 17 – January 16

Tickets: 610-891-0100; MediaTheatre.org

Season's GIFTING!

TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT GIFT (BOOK) FOR EVERYONE ON YOUR LIST.

Shelley Lawrence
Main Point Books

IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL time of the year! At least, that's what the song says. But for many, it's a stressful scramble to find the perfect present for everyone.

Fear not! Here are some great ideas to help make a dent in your list this year.

There's something for everyone, so dive in and get gifting!

Let's start with the younger set. "Construction Site, Merry and Bright" by Sherri Duskey Rinker and A.G. Ford is a great choice for the tiny trucker in your life. There are fun, liftable flaps to encourage interactive reading and help little ones develop motor skills. Your child will get a kick out of trying to guess what's under each flap. The book is a great read-along, and the trucks are really cute!

Got a pint-sized *Star Wars* fan on your list? Celebrate the holidays with "Star Wars: A Vader Family Sithmas" by Jeffrey Brown. This charming book features force-wielding snowball fights, gingerbread Death Stars, sledding with Han Solo, and lots more to keep your small fry—and you—engaged.

How about putting the new Guinness World Records book under the tree? The

2022 edition is completely revised and updated. And this year the editors put the environment front and center, showcasing eco-warriors and wonders of the natural world. There are also sections on pop-culture icons, sports heroes and achievers under 16. It's a gift the entire family will enjoy.

A cookbook is always a welcome present. And let's face it, you'll likely reap the benefits! For the baker in your life, best-selling author Dorrie Greenspan offers up "Baking with Dorie: Sweet, Salty & Simple." Each of the 150 mouth-watering recipes is easy, accessible and uses everyday ingredients. The chapters run the gamut from breakfast sweets to cakes, pies, cobblers and crisps. Sounds yummy, doesn't it? I may get this for someone I know.

For the vegetarian or veggie lover, there's "Milk Street Vegetables" by Christopher Kimball. Kimball takes us on a world tour with 250 recipes showcasing unique spices and techniques. Do chili-spiked carrots, skillet-charred Brussels sprouts and mashed potatoes with harissa and pistachios sound good? That's a small sample of the delicious dishes in this book.

Aspiring mixologists will appreciate "The Cocktail Workshop." Philly's own Steven

Grasse and Adam Erace explain the fundamentals of 20 classic cocktails, then offer ideas on how to make each drink distinctive with aging, infusing, garnishing and more.

Know someone who's hooked on Hallmark holiday movies? Check out "I'll Be Home for Christmas Movies," from the creators of the popular "Deck the Hallmark" podcast. Authors Brandon Gray, Daniel Pandolph and Dan Thompson answer burning questions like why do the lead characters all have amnesia? Why do so many female stockbrokers and lawyers have to plan parties? And do all the stories happen in a place called the "Kennyverse"?

Birders will get a laugh—and some practical advice—from "The Field Guide to Dumb Birds of the Whole Stupid World." Author Matt Kracht shares facts about "each bird's (annoying) call, its (stupid) migratory pattern, and its (downright tacky) markings." This is a fun book for bird lovers and bird haters alike.

Just want to gift someone a good read? Pulitzer prize-winner Louise Erdrich returns with a wickedly funny ghost story, "The Sentence." It's set in her hometown during the pandemic. A small bookstore in Minneapolis is haunted by the store's most annoying customer. And a new bookseller who survived a prison sentence by constantly reading tries to figure out why.

Beloved author Ann Patchett offers up a new collection of essays called "These Precious Days." This lovely collection touches on everything from home and family, friendships and writing, all infused with Patchett's grace, wit and warmth. It's a must-have for any Patchett fan.

Two friends share intimate conversations in "Renegades: Born in the USA." Former president Barack Obama and rock icon Bruce Springsteen get personal about their life stories, marriage and fatherhood, and



race and masculinity. The book includes full-color photos and rare archival material.

Need a break from shopping? Buy yourself or someone you love "The Christmas Bookshop" by Jenny Colgan. Read how life has thrown Carmen quite a curve. Left with a fractured family, no cash and few options, she moves in with her "perfect" sister in Edinburgh and takes a job renovating a decrepit bookshop. Can she get it in shape for the holidays? Can she mend her relationship with her family? It's a heartwarming Christmas tale for everyone.

Merry book shopping! ♦

Shelley Lawrence is a bookseller at Main Point Books, an independent bookstore with a handpicked selection for every member of the family. Check out their events, book groups and children's activities at MainPointBooks.com or on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Order on-line for delivery or pick-up. 484-580-6978; 116 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne.



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CHOOSING A One-of-a-Kind GIFT

SUPPORT THE ARTS
THIS GIVING SEASON

Malcolm Johnstone

GIFT GIVING—OFTEN A MAJOR CHALLENGE at this time of year—can become a pleasure when a unique work of art is presented to someone special in your life. Choosing to mark a holiday or event with an expressive gift of art means you’ve done more than scroll through the latest list of “top electronic gifts for 2021.”

And deciding to give a gift of art can become its own memorable occasion if you involve the recipient in selecting something that will become a permanent part of their life.

Fortunately for those searching for that one-of-a-kind gift, our area offers many options at both art events and art galleries. And the search for that perfect gift can be as much fun to give as to receive.

ART EVENTS

Let’s start first with two popular seasonal art events sponsored by the [Chester County Arts Association](#), offering opportunities to explore original works of art priced with every budget in mind.

[Christkindlemarkt](#), a traditional German outdoor/indoor holiday marketplace, lets you browse artworks by a variety of local artists and artisans who offer paintings and handmade pottery, each with the personal touch only an artist can give. Held over two days—December 3 from 5 to 9 p.m. and December 4 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Arts Association—the market embodies the spirit of the holidays, with live music, lighted Christmas trees, food trucks and artisan food vendors. Much more enjoyable than looking for parking at the mall!

Next, on December 9 through 2021, is the [“\\$300 and Under”](#) exhibition, where you’ll find exquisite original art works by Arts Association members on display—all priced, not surprisingly, under \$300. Choose a favorite without worrying about busting the bank. Enjoy the exhibit, pick out a special piece and share a lifetime of smiles as a reminder of that time. *Chester County Arts Association, 100 N. Bradford Ave., West Chester. More at [ChesterCountyArts.org](#).*



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LOCAL ART GALLERIES

We’ve rounded up ten of our favorite galleries, studios and art centers with something special this season. Have some fun and create your own tour.

Jump-start your holiday shopping in West Chester’s local galleries beginning with the [David Katz Gallery](#). David Katz, a.k.a The Sky Painter, transforms favorite Chester County landscapes into stunning works of art. For the holidays, stop in and browse twenty 14x18 original framed works—perfect for gifting. *128 E. Gay St., West Chester. [DavidKatzGallery](#).*

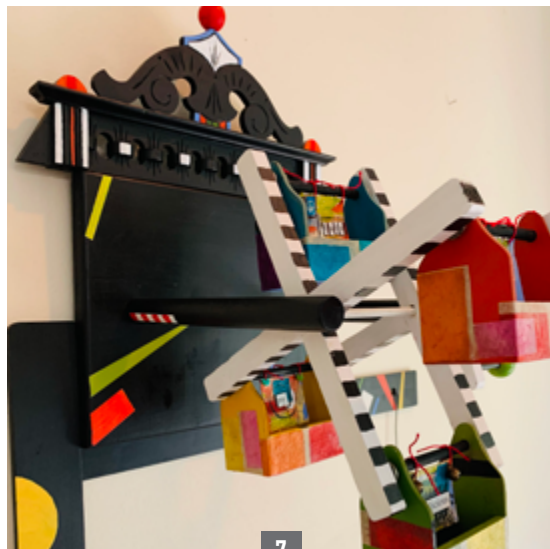
Then visit [John Hannafin Studio and Gallery](#) for impressionist oil paintings with uplifting colors and energetic brushstrokes. Gift a painting unique to someone special on your list with custom orders this holiday season. And watch for a grand re-opening of the renovated art studio coming soon. *19 S. Church St., West Chester. [JohnHannafin.com](#).*

Practice the art of thoughtful giving this holiday season at [The Art Trust’s](#) “Gifted” exhibit through January 7. Discover original art priced anywhere from \$45 to \$500 and ranging in mediums from paintings and sculptures to ceramics and jewelry. *16 W. Market St., West Chester. [TheArtTrust.org](#).*

A full-service gallery specializing in local art, [Visual Expansion Gallery](#) displays art ranging from realistic paintings to flower sculptures. Keep it festive and purchase Christmas ornaments featuring paintings and photographs of West Chester holiday scenes. You can also find fine art photos of the Borough and beyond by one of our favorite photographers, Timlyn Vaughan. *132 N. High St., West Chester. [VisualExpansionGallery.com](#).*

Let your holiday shopping continue while supporting artists with disabilities at [Bryn Mawr Rehab’s Art Ability Exhibit and Sale](#) through January 30.

1. Christkindlemarkt
2. David Katz Gallery, West Whiteland Inn
3. The Art Trust “Gifted” Exhibit
4. Barbara Moore Fine Art Gallery, Brinton’s Mill, Don Rankin
5. Square Pear Gallery
6. Oxford Arts Alliance



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Artists from around the world with cognitive disabilities submit their work, from paintings and photographs to fiber arts and stained glass. 414 Paoli Pk., Malvern. MainLineHealth.org/ArtAbility.

Next, head to the [Wayne Art Center's](http://WayneArtCenter.org) 26th Annual Craftsforms Holiday Shopping Weekend, December 10–12. View works from over 100 artists who create jewelry, apparel and accessories, home décor in wood, glass, textiles and wax, as well as unique gifts, cards and books. 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne. WayneArt.org.

Mark your calendar for the [Community Arts Center](http://CommunityArtsCenter.org) in Wallingford's holiday sale of fine crafts and pottery on December 3–11. The sale features one-of-a-kind handcrafted objects by members of the Potters Guild and other local artists. Shoppers can pre-register for a one-hour time slot during the first two days. 414 Plush Mill Rd., Wallingford. CommunityArtsCenter.org.

Shopping for a novice art collector? Visit [Barbara Moore Fine Art Gallery](http://BarbaraMooreFineArt.com) for their 5th Annual "Christmas in Miniature Art Exhibit and Moore," featuring original works from over 40 artists that are, well, in miniature. These small pieces are perfect for giving and starting the love of art collecting. 1609 Baltimore Pk., Bldg. 400A, Chadds Ford. BarbaraMooreFineArt.com.

When in Kennett, visit the [Square Pear Gallery](http://SquarePearGallery.com) for their holiday show, "Wrap It Up," on display through January 9th. Explore featured works including paintings, pottery, glass art, jewelry, art prints and cards. You're sure to find something for everyone on your list. 200 State St., Kennett Square. SquarePearGallery.com.

Wrap up your holiday shopping at the [Oxford Arts Alliance](http://OxfordArt.org) and their annual Artisan Gift Shop through December 18th. Shop local artisan goods and wares including modern macramé decorations and wall art, watercolor paintings and traditional pottery. 38 S. Third St., Oxford. OxfordArt.org.

Whether you're just beginning to appreciate collecting artwork, are a seasoned collector or buying for an art lover, you'll want to take advantage of this chance to truly engage with the best of Chester County area artists. ♦

Malcolm Johnstone is a Community Engagement Officer for Arts, Culture, and Historic Preservation at the Cultural Alliance of Chester County, an initiative of the Chester County Community Foundation. Madison Meinel contributed to this article.

7. The Art Trust, *It's My Turn*, Roberta Little
8. John Hannafin Studio & Gallery, *Heart of the Town*
9. David Katz Gallery










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Walter J. Cook Jeweler, Paoli
See ad page 10



Shirt and 1/4 Zip by Mizzen+Main,
Denim AG Jeans, Boots by Hari Mari
Phineas Gage, West Chester
See ad page 44



Verdigris bronze Monstera leaf earrings feature 14kt gold fill.
Handmade entirely by the artist.
Merchant of Menace, West Chester
See ad page 21



Expertly crafted contemporary, classic and custom diamond and gemstone jewelry
Sunset Hill Jewelers, West Chester
See ad page 44

Shopping AND SMALL LOCAL for the Holidays



TIM VAUGHAN PHOTOGRAPHY

WHAT'S TO FIND IN WEST CHESTER

Edwin Malet

YOU HAVE TO ADMIRE OUR LOCAL retailers. They looked at the town, picked a niche, hung out a sign, and hoped shoppers would come.

West Chester has attracted many intrepid entrepreneurs who opened the shops and boutiques that give West Chester its charm. These businesses continue to fill the holes of commerce that Amazon and big box stores can't fill and need our ongoing support, now more than ever. A used record shop, a stationery store, a music store. Often these shops add value with the service they provide, solving problems—the right fit, the right texture, just the right color—that the online shopping can't.

This season, I set out, of course, to buy gifts. “Perfect” ones, ideally. And I was determined to find Santa's presents among West Chester's shops.

A BIG RED BOW

The “Big Red Bow,” a two-story illuminated bow along High Street, has become a bright landmark at *Sunset Hill Jewelers*, where the holiday shopping season begins. Santa and his North Pole mailbox are outside the front door, ready to accept Wishlists and letters to Santa.

Inside, owner Sandra Riper has an extensive assortment of jewelry ready for shoppers on a range of budgets. The shop features estate and one-of-a-kind jewelry as well as traditional favorites. And they are happy to wrap your shiny purchase for you.

Sunset Hill is planning extended hours for those who wait until the last minute along with other holiday specials. Now more than ever Sunset Hill is hopeful shoppers will appreciate and support the local retail stores that make up their community.

AFFORDABLE STYLE

Vida Beale Consignment opened this past October in the heart of downtown West Chester, offering on-trend, upscale, designer clothing that appeals to a wide age group of women at an affordable price. Owner Kirsten Gross created Vida Beale (meaning “beautiful life”) from her passion to provide women with gently used clothing and accessories they “may not ordinarily be able to afford.”

In the back room, you'll find furniture and home décor, and a constantly changing inventory to require frequent visits. Kirsten also provides personal shopping services, shopping by private appointment, and home visits and buy-outs.

The store is having specials throughout the holiday season as well as a “Cozy Christmas” shopping event, plus additional holiday shopping hours on Sundays through December 26th.

THINKING OF PARIS

Mia Nassini is the owner and founder of *LeBerger*. The store is as much a boutique—offering leather bags, jewelry, clothes, eyewear and hats—as it is an art gallery, with paintings by French artists collected by Peter Mavrides mostly on the streets of Paris.

Mia was inspired by the concept of combining the sophistication of contemporary French fashion and the eternal appeal of French paintings and art. The works, representing almost every decade of the 20th and 21st centuries, are interspersed among the store's other sale items. Both Mia and Peter strive to create a relaxing and welcoming environment to peruse, gaze and admire the fashions and art. And of course, buy something to put under the tree.

THIS WILL BE PERFECT

Yes, it's a pun. *Thistle Be Perfect* combines a love of nature with a phrase the owner, Katie Jennings, often hears as she's helping customers find the “perfect” piece.

Open since November 2019, the store sells exclusively hand-made, small batch items, including candles, soaps, purses, jewelry, pottery, mugs, home decor, pillows, socks, cards, notepads and bath items. You'll also find gifts for the men on your list, such as flasks, bottle openers, grooming supplies, dopp bags, money clips and coasters. Whew! “Something for everyone,” says Katie. An excellent place to check off several items from my list.

This season, *Thistle Be Perfect* is open for hosting events and personal shopping parties. For the holidays, Katie will dress up the store and front window and carry seasonal items.

GET AROUND

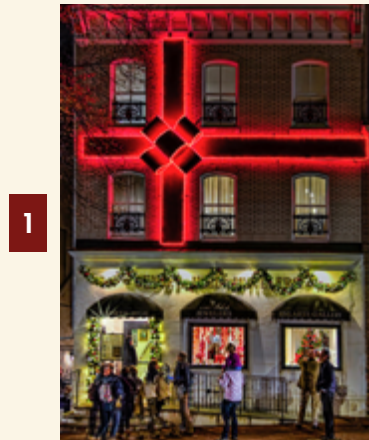
Fairman's Skate Shop, established in 1977, has been in its current location since the 1990s. At Fairman's you can have a skateboard built from scratch—choosing a deck, wheels, bearings, etc. You can get your board repaired and equip your skateboarder with sunglasses, shoes, a hat or beanie, pants and shirt, logoed socks and safety gear. After Christmas, maybe your boarder will look a tad more stylish.

Mike Moll, son of the founder and current owner, is planning for the holidays. For one, he's “getting up a bunch of cool Christmas stuff” and “dropping a killer new line of Fairman's boards and apparel.” Fairman's is planning a buy one, get a second for half price sale on select shoes, 15% off Fairman's branded apparel, and other special deals.

A LITTLE INSPIRATION

Pine & Quill opened a year ago, emphasizing local, hand-made, one-of-a-kind crafts. The inventory is diverse, ranging from furniture and home décor to candles and small terrariums. Many customers choose this store because they want to support local businesses and artisans.

Owner Dianna DeStefano is celebrating the store's anniversary and the season with a spin-your-sale wheel and great deals on holiday decor and gifts. The selection of candles and laser wood-cut signs are the hottest items, with many that are holiday-themed.



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1. Sunset Hill Jewelers
2. Vida Beale Consignment
3. Thistle Be Perfect
4. LeBerger
5. Pine & Quill

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- 6. Fairman's Skate Shop
- 7. H. Rose Boutique
- 8. Hop Fidelity
- 9. Phineas Gage

DRESSING UP

Rachel Berry of H. Rose Boutique is extremely optimistic about holiday shopping. “Our customers are out and excited again to shop locally, support locally, see products in person, try them on, get advice on styling. We are over the moon!”

The H. Rose Boutique has clothes and gifts for women, new mothers, and children of all ages. You’ll find BoGo sales and fabulous giveaways “We’re gearing up for a great gift-giving season ahead. And we’re always happy to wrap your bag with a great bow and provide gift boxes!”

PLAY IT AGAIN

There’s something about vinyl. Maybe the warmth or the richness of the sound. In any case, for owner Byron Greatorex, vinyl rules. Hop Fidelity is “always on the hunt for used records.” It buys from private sales, e.g., estate sales, flea markets, any place where the store

might get access to some good titles. New records are also bought from distributors and sometimes directly from labels.

As for the “Hop” in Hop Fidelity, the store expects its liquor license before Christmas, but for now, it offers free pours. Stop by to enjoy live music on December 15th, and likely more tunes on other dates. Check Facebook and Instagram for updates.

WHERE THE BOYS ARE

For men, “Johnnie-O, Faherty and Mizzen + Main continue to be our top selling brands,” says Jaimie Weisbrot, owner of Phineas Gage. Quarter-zips, button downs and sweaters are high on this year’s gift list and this shop has a great selection.

The store window is thoroughly decorated, though details were kept under wraps until the “big reveal” at Thanksgiving for West Chester’s window decorating contest. The store is planning weekly promotions through Christmas, bringing more merchandise in

than last year and gearing up for a busier holiday season with the return of in-person holiday parties and events. Plus foot traffic is up, too!

AT THE MUSEUM

Don’t miss the Museum Shop inside the Chester County History Center. It features an outstanding collection of books, prints, maps, cards, ornaments, mementos, children’s merchandise and home décor, highlighting local items, artists and authors.

Paper Moon Custom Stationery, which manages the store, also creates invitations and personalized stationery. You’ll find Christmas and other holiday decorations for sale as well as Christmas cards.

On December 4th, Paper Moon will have a Holiday Market with Greens Sale to benefit the History Center.

FOR THE PIANO MAN

For over 90 years, Taylor’s Music Store & Studio has been an institution on Gay Street, selling every musical instrument, from pianos to clarinets, violas to drum sets, and piccolos to tubas. Len Doyle, the owner, says ukuleles, surprisingly, are often a popular Christmas gift.

In addition to sales, they will repair your instrument, provide lessons, offer sheet music and rentals. The store conducts lessons for about 350 students weekly. Perhaps give a package of lessons under the tree? But maybe not for drums ...

FRANKLY, IT’S UNUSUAL

You may not know what to make of the Little Shop Of Nightmares, opened last summer by Nina Frangieh. It has a “yard sale type vibe.” Prices are negotiable, mainly because she “loves her things to go to good homes.”

Nina collects all sorts of things for her shop—an old Moroccan sword, a crawling 1800s wax doll, a human skull. One intriguing piece, an antique chess set, is at least 130 years old, marble and pewter base, and characters brushed with 24-carat gold. “If it’s unusual I gotta have it.”

Not everything in the shop is scary, though. Nina has nice garments, jewelry and art, but “I display things in the most disturbing way possible, just to get attention.”

Open Fridays and Saturdays. Shop at your own risk.

So ends my tour of a dozen shops. Now the air has turned chilly, and I turn up my collar. West Chester’s sounds—music from the shops, bells chiming in the distance—combine with aromas wafting out of restaurants to lure me in. I settle in a booth and review my list with many checks. ♦

See the map of Downtown West Chester at the end of this article for locations of these and other locally owned shops, perfect for visiting during the holidays.

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12



- 10. Paper Moon
- 11. Taylor’s Music Store & Studio
- 12. Little Shop Of Nightmares

Holiday Fun in West Chester

THROUGH JANUARY 7
“Gifted”—16th Annual Holiday Exhibit at The Art Trust. Give the gift of original art. *Dec. 2*, enjoy Bourbon & Bubbles, 5 to 8:30. 16 W. Market St. Gallery hours, Mon–Fri, 9 to 4:30. 484-301-2784; TheArtTrust.org.

NOVEMBER 26–JANUARY 1
Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester. *See article in this issue.*

DECEMBER 4
2021 West Chester Charity Ball. Celebrating 33 years of holiday tradition with dinner, music, dancing, auctions and more. Join Chester County residents and businesses in the effort to end homelessness in the community. West Chester Golf & Country Club, 111 W. Ashbridge St. 6 pm. For tickets, 610-431-3598; FriendsAssoc.org/Charity-Ball.

DECEMBER 4
Santa at the Square—Marshall Square Park. Families, friends and pets are invited to come to the park for free pictures with the Big Guy in red, sip hot chocolate and munch cookies and pastries. 200 E. Marshall St. at the gazebo. 5 to 7 pm. Free, donations accepted. 610-436-9010; West-Chester.com.

DECEMBER 4–19
West Chester Railroad Holiday Events. *Dec. 4–19*, Santa’s Express: bring your lists for Santa and meet at Market Street Station, then ride to Glen Mills and back. 11 am, 1, 3 & 5 pm. *Dec 5 & 12*, Christmas Tree Train: ride out to Wiggins Tree Farm, 8 am. 230 E. Market St. \$10–\$30. 610-430-2233; WCRailroad.com.

DECEMBER 4–19
West Chester Public Library Holiday Home Tour and Holiday Door Tour. *Dec. 4*, the Holiday Home Tour will showcase eight homes on the north side of the Borough decked out for the holidays, 10 to 3, \$40. *Dec. 4–19*, the Holiday Door Tour is a free, self-guided tour of West Chester doors and porches decorated in holiday finery. Home Tour ticket includes a raffle and scavenger hunt. Donation requested. Benefits the library and community. WCPublicLibrary.org.

DECEMBER 3–18
Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center. *Dec. 3 & 4*, *Holiday Cheer Concert, traditional holiday favorites and lively new songs*, *Fri, 5 pm; Sat, 1, \$10–\$15. Dec. 10–12, 16 & 18*, “*The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*” a hilarious and heartwarming tale adapted from

the best-selling book by local playwright Barbara Robinson, Thurs–Sat, 7 pm; Sat–Sun, 2 pm. \$15–\$25. *Dec. 17*, A Very Gospel Christmas, a holiday musical experience drawing on the roots of African-American music, 7:30, \$15–\$33. 226 N. High St. 610-356-2787; UptownWestChester.org.

DECEMBER 11
American Helicopter Museum Santa Fest. See Santa arrive by helicopter at 11 am. Bring your camera for a photo opp with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Paws for People therapy dogs will visit and you can make a holiday-themed craft and enjoy holiday movies. 1220 American Blvd. 10 to 2. \$10. AmericanHelicopter.museum.

DECEMBER 17–19
Brandywine Ballet Presents *The Nutcracker*. Ring in the season with Tchaikovsky’s timeless score and be transported with Clara to the magical Land of Sweets. West Chester University, Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall, 700 S. High St. Thurs, 10 am; Fri–Sat, 11 am and 5 pm. \$25–\$45. 610-696-2711; BrandywineBallet.org.

More at DowntownWestChester.com.



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Downtown West Chester



Holiday Shopping Guide

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Luxey Little Ones | 25. Mainline Custom Clothiers |
| 2. Jane Chalfant / Artisan Gallery | 26. Kaplan’s Fine Jewelry |
| 3. Artistic Eyewear | 27. HOP Fidelity |
| 4. Chester Co. History Center | 28. OZ Bridal |
| 4. Paper Moon @ CCHC | 29. Woman’s Exchange |
| 5. G&G Cigars | 30. Church Street Gallery |
| 6. Sabrina Ann Couture | 31. The Antique Shop |
| 7. Visual Expansion Gallery | 32. Kilwin’s West Chester |
| 8. Emily Alice | 33. La Chic Boutique |
| 9. Fairman’s Skate Shop | 34. Coins of Chester County |
| 10. KALY | 35. All the Dogs |
| 11. Big Diamond Importers & Fine Jewelry | 36. Vida Beale Consignment |
| 12. Little Shop of Nightmares | 37. Art Trust Gallery at Meridian Bank |
| 13. Le Berger | 38. Kati Mac Floral Designs |
| 14. TranquilITEA | 39. A Taste of Olive |
| 15. Creep Records | 40. Éclat Chocolate |
| 16. May 23 Clothing & Accessories | 41. Bryn Mawr Running Co. |
| 17. Precision Eye Care | 42. Phineas Gage |
| 18. Malena’s Vintage Boutique | 43. Gingko Arts |
| 19. H. Rose Boutique | 44. Sunset Hill Jewelers Fine Arts Gallery |
| 20. Blink | 45. Pine + Quill |
| 21. Green Eyed Lady | 46. Tish Boutique |
| 22. Taylor’s Music Store & Studio | 47. David Katz Gallery |
| 23. Thistle Be Perfect24. The 5 Senses | 48. Prince of Puff |
| | 49. G-Spot Thrift Boutique |
| | 50. Steele House Nutrition |

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This Holiday Season
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**WARM GREETINGS FROM THE
 WEST CHESTER BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT!**

Images provided by Timlyn Vaughan Photography



West Chester Lights Up with 5 Enchanting Weekends of Holiday Fun

NOVEMBER 26–JANUARY 1



IT'S NO SECRET WEST CHESTER'S CHRISTMAS PARADE is a beloved tradition. But when COVID cancelled it last year, and delayed planning for this year, organizers knew they must re-imagine celebrations for 2021. The result: Chester County Hospital Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester—five weekends of holiday fun and thousands of holiday lights to bring joy to visitors across the region and much-needed business to the one-of-a-kind shops and restaurants that are the heart of West Chester's charm.

"We're all feeling it—the need to strengthen community connections safely while also experiencing real joy again. We're making it our mission to deliver that to visitors as only West Chester can, while supporting our local shops and restaurants for an entire month," says Katie Walker, President of the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce, the organizer of Chester County Hospital Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester.

Thanks to support from 50+ businesses, the streets of West Chester will come alive with the glow of thousands of holiday lights every evening from November 26 to January 1, with each weekend featuring unique holiday experiences, shopping and dining.

Nov. 26–28: It all kicks off during **Shop Small Business Weekend** on Black Friday, when the Borough illuminates for the first time and visitors enjoy free parking all weekend. The Making Spirits Bright Holiday Music Series launches outdoors, Santa makes his first weekly tour of the Borough on a fire truck on Saturday, and Sunday evening's Menorah Lighting captures the spirit of the season. Plus carolers and the kick-off of the Professional Gingerbread House Competition.

Dec. 3–5: Those who make it a tradition to visit West Chester every holiday season will enjoy an **Old-Fashioned Holiday Weekend**. It begins Friday evening with the traditional tree lighting ceremony at West Chester's Historic Courthouse on Dec. 3, featuring surprise guests and live music from the West Chester University Gospel Choir, WCU Marching Band, a cappella group Under A Rest, and West Chester Area School District Elementary Honors Chorus. A gingerbread house competition will be in full swing, with delectable displays by Cakes & Candies by Maryellen, Carlino's Market,

John Serock Catering, The Master's Baker and Yori's Bakery. Did we mention Breakfast with Santa and a Holiday Bazaar at the History Center? Santa tours the Borough on a fire truck at 3 p.m. and sits for free photos at the Marshall Square Park gazebo (200 E. Marshall St.) Leashed pets welcome. *More info: GreaterWestChester.com.*


Dec. 10–12: A very special weekend is devoted to **First Responders and Health Care Heroes**. Throughout the season and during this weekend, 100% of QR code donations will go to local fire departments, police departments, EMS and health care workers. Enjoy roaming carolers and free hot chocolate, then explore Holidays Around the World. Meet real firefighters during a Touch-a-Truck event from 11 to 2, where your family can sign a thank-you banner to let local heroes know how much their service is appreciated. Santa is back on the fire truck at 3.

Dec. 17–19: **'Twas the Weekend Before Christmas** offers a chance for last-minute shopping during Parents Night Out on Friday evening. Drop off the kids at Oscar Lasko YMCA. (Registration required, plus a fee.) That's all followed by gingerbread cookie decorating and family fun on Saturday, live music and Santa delighting children as he rides a fire truck at 3. But watch out for the Grinch!

Dec. 31–Jan. 1: The fun pauses for Christmas weekend, but returns on **New Year's Weekend** with your last chance to take a glowing stroll through the Borough's historic streets and enjoy signature drinks and appetizers from your favorite West Chester restaurants.


"As title sponsor, Chester County Hospital is thrilled to draw visitors from throughout the region to enjoy our businesses, culture and people in downtown West Chester. We know everyone is eager to support local business during this time," says Michael J. Duncan, President & CEO, Chester County Hospital. "Throughout the pandemic, our team has been so touched by the generosity and support from our local businesses and community. It's an honor to join the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce in this event as a way to show our sincere gratitude. We look forward to sharing the festivities with our friends, families and neighbors this holiday season!" ♦ *For details on events, check an updated schedule at GWCC.org.*

PHOTO COURTESY: WEST CHESTER VIEWS



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Photography by Tessa Vaughan



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YOUR GUIDE TO CELEBRATING LOCALLY

Lauren Durante,
Gabriella Ruggirello



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THERE'S PLENTY OF HOLIDAY CHEER IN THE Brandywine Valley! With holiday traditions and celebrations—Christmas tree lightings that light up the sky, frosty horse-drawn carriage rides, guest appearances from Santa himself and so much more. You can't be a grinch this year.

Many of our local towns recommend staying ho ho home for the holidays, with so much to see and do in our own backyard.

Enjoy these holiday happenings. And may your days feel merry and bright.

A COMEBACK CHRISTMAS IN COATESVILLE

The Coatesville Christmas Parade is bouncing back, returning joyful times after too long a hiatus. On Saturday, December 4th, Coatesville will once again be marking the season with captivating performances and festive floats along the parade route (Lincoln Highway (Business Route 30) at Strode Ave. to 11th Ave.). Watch the parade cruise through town, as floats compete to win the title for the most holiday spirit. Feel free to rank your own favorites along with the judges. CoatesvilleChristmasParade.com.

DECKING OUT DOWNINGTOWN

This year's Christmas Tree Lighting will brighten the night on November 27th. Enjoy refreshments, live music, crafts, games and plenty of family fun before Santa arrives at 6:45 p.m. to light the tree.

On Saturday, December 11th, the Good Neighbor Christmas Parade will dash down an almost two-mile route from Gable to

Whiteland Avenues. Holiday floats bring Christmas cheer to the crowds that line the streets awaiting appearances from Mr. and Mrs. Claus. DTownChristmas.com.

The trees aren't the only things getting the holiday look. Stores in Downingtown will be dressed up in their best Christmas FINEST to vie for recognition in the [Storefront Decorating Contest](#). Details and updates on the website. DTownChristmas.com.

A KENNETT CHRISTMAS

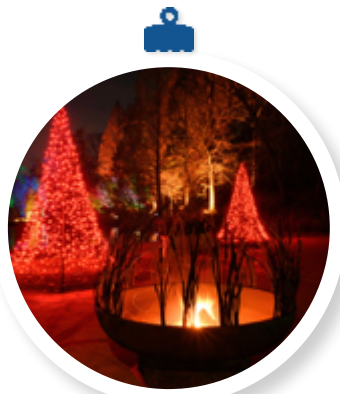
Holiday cheer fills the air in Kennett Square this season. Nearby Longwood Gardens features fire and ice as towering flame-decorated trees and icy-hued sights delight visitors who warm themselves by firepits as they ooh and aah at half-a-million glittering lights. Through January 9th, enjoy the magical beauty this Winter Wonderland has to offer. Timed tickets online (\$16–\$30). LongwoodGardens.com.

Mark your calendar for a visit to Kennett's Holiday Village Market at The Creamery on December 4th, 5th, 11th and 12th. Stroll the outdoor Christmas Market, complete with ice sculptures, food trucks, Santa and so much more! Make progress on your Christmas list as you visit Market vendors there, as well as at the charming downtown Kennett shops. Take a free shuttle during the Market (11 a.m. to 6 p.m.) from Birch to Broad Street where you can see tree lights "Light Up the Square" again this year, plus enjoy "Tinsel on the Town" as you stroll along State Street on December 10. KennettHolidayVillage.com.

As always, check event websites for attendance restrictions.



Downingtown
Christmas Parade



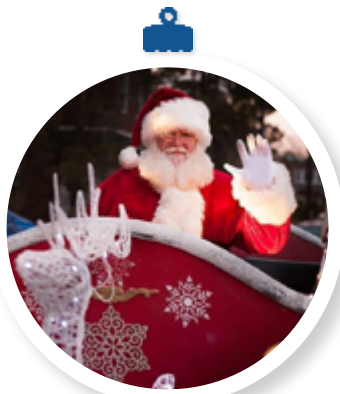
Longwood Gardens Fire
& Ice Display



Kennett Holiday
Village Market



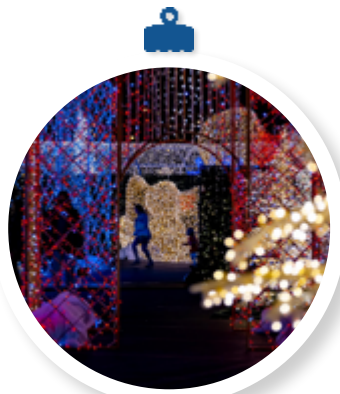
Christmas on King
in Malvern



Santa Parade
in Media



Herr's Christmas
Light Display



Tinseltown
Holiday Spectacular



Luminaria Shopping Night
in Phoenixville

CHRISTMAS MAGIC IN MALVERN

Prepare for the jolly man with the big bag of toys in Malvern and celebrate [Christmas on King](#). Kick off the holidays on November 26th, in Burke Park with the [Tree Lighting Ceremony](#) at 6 p.m. Let the holiday spirit decorate your day on December 4th, by [shopping locally on King Street](#). Enjoy Santa, music, food trucks, balloon artists and more as you shop small on King throughout the afternoon. [MalvernBusiness.com](#).

MERRY TIMES IN MEDIA

So many merry things to do in Media! Start with the Santa parade on November 28th, and see performers, classic cars and fire engines along the four-mile route (starting at State & Monroe Streets).

Continue in the Christmas spirit with carols, hot chocolate and the [Christmas Tree Lighting](#), December 5th, at the Rose Valley Museum. Register online. [RoseValleyMuseum.org](#).

Make merry all through the month of December as you sing along to the Media Theatre's production of [Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer Jr.](#) Featuring all your holiday favorites, this musical takes you on jolly adventures to learn how our differences make us special. Runs weekends plus additional nights during Christmas week. Tickets \$17–\$22. [MediaTheatre.org](#).

NOEL IN NOTTINGHAM AND OXFORD

Herr's Foods (our local snack food company) illuminates the holidays with their annual [Christmas Light Display](#). Head to southern Chester County to see 600,000 lights set the night sky aglow, from November to January. Take a drive around the grounds with the company of the reindeer, led by Rudolph, as you cruise through the light show from the comfort of your car. [Herrs.com](#).

Join a jolly celebration at the [First Friday Country Christmas](#) in downtown Oxford, for a not-so-silent night on December 3rd. Join Santa at the Oxford Mainstreet headquarters on Third Street for photos plus kid-friendly fun. Enjoy an enchanted evening with horse-drawn carriages, hayrides and music to set the tone for the holidays. [DownTownOxfordPa.org](#).

OAKS' NEW HOLIDAY SPECTACULAR

Holiday traditions old and new—the perfect combination. New this year is the [Tinseltown Holiday Spectacular](#)! From November 26th to January 2nd, the Fairgrounds at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center are transformed. Stroll through a Winter Wonderland of lights that create whimsical sculptures. Check off your holiday shopping list, enjoy festive holiday treats (adult beverages included), and skate across the synthetic ice surface. Remember to say hi to

Santa and Mrs. Claus before you leave! Tickets \$14–\$20. Special pet and sensory-friendly nights. [TinseltownHoliday.com](#).

FIERY FESTIVITIES IN PHOENIXVILLE

Find local crafts that put Santa's elves to shame at the [Christmas Craft Show](#) on December 4th at the Grace Crossing Community Church. If you can't hit all the shops then, head to town again on December 8th for the 3rd annual [Luminaria Shopping Night](#), when local shops offer special holiday activities and sales. [TisTheSeasonPXV.com](#).

Phoenixville's fiery [Firebird Festival](#) always delights. Paying homage to the town's namesake and building community this holiday season, the Phoenix illuminates the night as it's set ablaze, December 11th, from 5 to 8 p.m., in Veterans Memorial Park. [FirebirdFestival.com](#).

WHIMSICAL IN WAYNE

Celebrate [Christmas in Wayne](#) with family fun on the weekend of December 3rd. Start with a [Christmas Tree Lighting](#) at 6:30 p.m. on North Wayne Ave., featuring carriage rides and a visit from Santa. On December 4th, Santa returns to town to visit the firehouse at 10 a.m. The weekend wraps up with Christmas caroling, hot cocoa and Santa at the [Radnor Historical Society at the Finley House](#), Dec. 5th. Radnor Historical Society, 113 W. Beechtree Ln., Wayne. [WayneChristmas.com](#).

WINTER IN WILMINGTON

Searching for festive fun for the kiddos? Check out the Grand Opera House's December 5th performance of [Santa Saves Christmas Live Show](#), a story about Santa running out of gas and crashing in Wilmington. Join the singing and bring your Christmas spirit to help fuel Santa's sleigh to save Christmas! [VisitWilmingtonDE.com](#).

Enjoy more holiday fun at the Grand Opera House with [Jane Lynch's A Swingin' Little Christmas](#), December 3rd, performances of [The Nutcracker](#), and the holiday rock event, [Wizards of Winter](#) on December 17th at 8 p.m. [TheGrandWilmington.org](#).

And don't be a Scrooge. [The Candlelight Theatre](#) is performing [A Christmas Carol](#) from November 20th to December 22nd, sure to get you in the holiday spirit. [CandlelightTheatreDelaware.com](#).

Have a holly jolly Hagley Christmas and walk the decked-out halls of the former du Pont home for [Holidays at Hagley](#). Santa visits December 4th, and Twilight Tours are available throughout the month on select days. [Hagley.org](#).

Keep the spirit strong through January 2nd by celebrating [Yuletide at Winterthur](#), another former du Pont home, where they lavishly decorate the mansion in its holiday best for the season. Tickets online. [Winterthur.org](#).

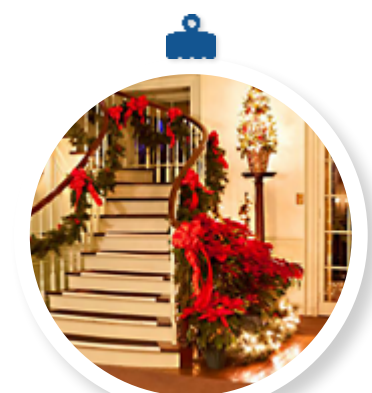
And finally, see St. Nick at the zoo. Santa will visit the [Brandywine Zoo](#), December 11th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., ready to greet all the creatures (and kids) who were naughty and nice this year. [BrandywineZoo.org](#). ♦



Jane Lynch and Co.
at The Grand



Wayne
Christmas



Holidays at Hagley Museum
& Library

Cut-Your-Own Christmas “Treedition”

PICKING THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS TREE CAN BE A challenge. So many shapes, sizes and varieties—from balsam firs to Norway spruces and everything in between.

Share the Christmas spirit by supporting local when you choose your tree. Find a farm near you to pick your pre-cut tree or find a day in your schedule to visit one of our favorite cut-your-own tree farms. Here are a few of our favorites.

Boswell's Tree Farm has been a family-owned farm for over 70 years, so they know what they're doing. Bring along gloves fit for sawing and pick your tree from their large selection, including Norway, Colorado, blue or white spruce, Canaan or Douglas fir, or white pine. Let this family farm's holiday tradition become a part of yours. 1093 N. Grand Ave., Collegeville. 484-902-0148; BoswellsTreeFarm.com.

Clarks Christmas Tree Farm is the place for variety, decor and more! Get in the holiday spirit with hot cider and treats after you chopped your evergreen and visited the Christmas Shop. Choose from Byers Choice and Jim Shore collectibles, snowmen, snow globes and ornaments for your tree. Find a variety of fir trees here: Fraser, Douglas, Korean and Concolor. 235 Pusey Mill Rd., Cochranville. 610-358-4933; ClarksChristmasTrees.com.

Sitko Tree Farm is here to help! Offering wreaths, window decor, centerpieces and other decorations in the Lil' Country Store, Sitko has your living room covered. Plus their new Home Bound Program can help Grandma and Grandpa with delivery and set up of their Christmas tree along with removal at season's end. Cut your own Douglas or balsam fir or blue spruce, or you pick a tree from the pre-cut lot. 1141 Kepler Rd., Pottstown. 610-468-6647; SitkoTreeFarm.com.

Schmidt's Tree Farm adds friendly competition to the holiday festivities on Saturday and Sunday with their Black Bear Special. Find the stuffed Black Bear hidden in a tree and get the tree (and bear) for free! Enjoy the company of their reindeer as you select your tree—Fraser, Concolor, Canaan, Nordmann or Douglas fir, as well

as Norway, Colorado or blue spruce. You'll be BEAR-y happy with your decision. 1741 Flint Hill Rd., Landenberg. 610-274-8560; SchmidtsTreeFarm.com.

Spruce Grove Tree Farm is a great place to bring your elves. With a variety of tree species to choose from, train rides, face painting, petting zoos and more, the kids will be bursting with Christmas cheer. Santa visits on Saturdays and Sundays, and refreshments are offered along with the sounds of the Mainliners Barbershop Quartet. Find your Fraser, Concolor, Douglas or Korean firs here. 501 Blue Gill Rd., Oxford. 610-496-6823; SpruceGrovePA.com.

Wiggins Christmas Trees has locations in West Chester and Cochranville ready for your saw. For a few holiday weekends, they also have train rides on the West Chester Railroad to the farm. Board at the Market Street Station in West Chester and enjoy coffee, hot cocoa and doughnuts on your way to your tree. On the ride back, the trees are tagged and sent on the train. Cut your own Douglas fir at either farm or choose a pre-cut Douglas or Fraser fir from their West Chester pre-cut lot. 1257 Westtown Thornton Rd., West Chester. 610-344-7822; WigginsChristmasTrees.com. ♦

~ Lauren Durante

Choosing Your Pre-cut Tree

Buying a pre-cut tree? Make sure it's freshly cut using these tips to help you pick a fresh one!

Needle Bend: Take a fresh needle in your fingers and bend it in half. For a fresh pine, the needle should bend in half. But for a fresh fir, the needle snaps.

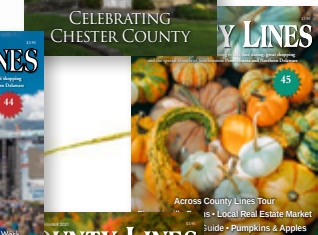
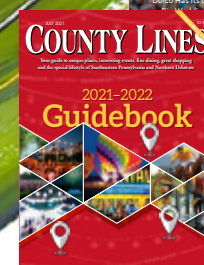
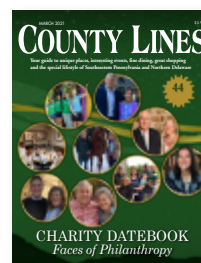
Hand Test: See if needles stay on the tree after you run your hand along a branch. Just say no if too many needles fall.

Sticky Trunk: Check for a sticky trunk! That sappy base shows the tree isn't too dry to last through your holiday season.

Look and Sniff: Avoid musty trees, discolored foliage or wrinkled bark and you'll have the freshest of the lot.

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BE A HOLIDAY HERO AND GIVE THE GIFT
OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Madison Meinel

THIS IS THE SEASON FOR PACKED SOCIAL CALENDARS, mounting gift-giving pressure, recurring family drama, ubiquitous holiday goodies and the inevitable holiday burnout. It's no wonder you can feel overwhelmed during the holidays. And given the past few years we've all had, it's safe to say a little health and wellness are in order.

So, be this year's holiday hero with wellness, fitness and self-care gifts to help your friends and family de-stress after the festivities.

We've gathered some top-tier gifts from local gyms, shops and spas to help everyone on your list relax and prioritize their well-being. And just maybe get a head start on those ambitious New Year's resolutions!

TRAINERS, GYMS AND CLASSES

This holiday season (and beyond), we're all about supporting local, and that goes for fitness too. Whether your list is filled with workout beginners, yogis or gym rats, there's a fitness haven for everyone.

Shopping for a fitness newbie? Head to [Gage Strength Training](#), a West Chester gym for everyone with a focus on beginners and folks over 40. Gage offers small and large group personal training, 1-1 private personal training and custom nutrition plans. They take a comprehensive approach to fitness with low impact workouts and safe nutrition plans for those apprehensive about starting a new fitness routine.

Help your relatives find their zen space at [Now & Zen Yoga Studio](#) in West Chester. The studio offers virtual classes seven days a week for all skill levels. Happily they're slowly re-incorporating in-person classes. Choose between beginner workshops like Mindful Movement or stretch yourself and join their intermediate classes, including Warm Flow. Be sure to take advantage of their new-student holiday special—3 classes for \$39—when gifting.

Looking for something different? [Society Boxing and Fitness](#) in Downingtown is ready for people with more energy than they know what to do with. Get your friends and family ready to shake off the excess holiday stress with boxing, kickboxing or HIIT (high intensity interval training). Boxing has become increasingly popular for men and women looking to let off some steam. There's a one-week free trial for those new to the facility, along with monthly memberships for classes and access to their full gym.

And finally, for fitness friends always looking to try something new, consider ever-popular Pilates classes. Pilates workouts help with a range of issues from correcting posture to focusing the mind and soothing aching muscles. [Balanced-Pilates](#) in Kennett Square has class bundles perfect for gift giving. Purchase a 5-, 10- or 20-session bundle, print out the confirmation, put it in a festive holiday card, and boom, you're done! And a holiday hero ...

ATHLETIC CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Help your friends and family look their best while they work on feeling their best. The latest exercise outfit may be that extra incentive needed to get them moving.



Order a class bundle from [Balanced-Pilates](#)



Gift a boxing class from [Society Boxing and Fitness](#)



Try [Now & Zen Yoga Studio's](#) holiday special



Check out personal trainers at [Gage Strength Fitness](#)



Browse Trail Creek Outfitters apparel



Pick up a gift card for a spa day



Check out shoes at Bryn Mawr Running Co.



Create a gift box with local spa products

Stop by [Bryn Mawr Running Company](#) (in West Chester, Media and, of course, Bryn Mawr) for all the walkers, runners or sneakerheads in your life. Talk to one of the staff experts to find the perfect shoe for short distance, long distance or everyday use. And as always, if you can't decide on the style or the best fit, a gift card is always a safe choice.

At [Trail Creek Outfitters](#), in Glen Mills and Kennett Square, you'll find top clothing brands and equipment for all the outdoorsy folks on your list. Shop brands like The North Face, Patagonia, Birkenstock and Yeti, or pick up a gift card if you're having trouble deciding. Plus, Trail Creek chooses environmentally conscious products featured in their "Brands That Give Back" section, so you can find the perfect present and make a purchase that can make a difference. A win-win!

Another option for those mindful of their carbon footprint is [Play It Again Sports](#) in Berwyn, with new and second-hand sporting equipment. Offering everything from simple basketball and soccer equipment to more niche activities like paintball and motorcross, this one-stop shop has a little something for everyone. Gift a new tennis racquet and roller skates or introduce someone on your list to a new sport like boxing or martial arts.

PAMPERING

There are still plenty of gift options for those who'd rather lie back and relax with a facemask than suit up for an early morning run. A full pampering session at one of our local spas might be just the ticket.

[Avante Salon & Spa](#) in West Chester has a team of dedicated estheticians ready to create a customized spa experience. Purchase one of their packages, like the Mental Health Day complete with a full-body massage, facial, haircut, hand treatment plus manicure and pedicure. Or keep it simple with their Relaxation package for a hand treatment, 30-minute massage, facial and soothing footbath.

Or create a self-care gift box with products from [Currie Hair Skin & Nails](#) (in Glen Mills, Wayne and Kennett Square). Bring the salon experience home with a nourishing hair mask, a volumizing lip serum, an exfoliating honey cleanser and a hydrating facemask. Not sure which products to choose? Ask an expert or grab a gift card.

And in Media, head to [Serenity Wellness Center](#)—a holistic center focusing on stress and pain reduction, massages and skin-care. Give a gift card for one of their Custom Plus Facials, great for anti-aging, acne and sensitive skin. The esthetician will analyze the skin type and select a customized treatment to match personal preferences. It takes the guesswork out of choosing which treatment is best!

No matter what you choose, your friends and family will thank you for getting them refreshed and ready to tackle the New Year. And maybe they'll return the favor! ♦

HOLIDAY WINDOW SHOPPING

IT'S THE TIME OF YEAR when we look forward to making special memories with family and friends, taking in the lights and decorations, planning a holiday excursion (check our Best Things to Do column for all the fun happening this month) and ... shopping.

To make it easier for you, we've compiled a list of shops offering something for everyone and, to make a day of it, restaurants where you can rejuvenate with a beverage, a meal, some apps with friends ... Take a breather to check your list twice.

For our part, we wish you the Happiest of Holidays and, as always to our readers and advertisers, our most heartfelt thank you. Happy New Year!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

PENNSYLVANIA

Exton

[Appetites on Main](#), located in Main Street at Exton, offers casual American comfort food at a good value. It's a great place to stop and relax during the busy holiday season. Daily Happy Hour, 4 to 6 p.m., includes \$2.75 select domestics, \$1 off all appetizers, craft beer and cocktails. Open daily for dine-in with bar seating, takeout & delivery 11:30 a.m. to at least midnight daily, full menu until midnight. 286 Main St. 610-594-2030. Order online at [AppetitesOnMain.com](#).

Deck the halls this holiday season with 18th-century through Victorian-era original and reproduction furniture, lighting fixtures and furniture hardware. Visit the showroom at [Ball & Ball](#) to find unique gift ideas including candlesticks, bookends, lanterns and fireplace accessories made on the premises in brass, tin, copper and hand-forged iron and bronze. All perfect gifts this holiday season. Open Monday–Thursday, from 8 to 4:30, Friday 8 to 1; 463 W. Lincoln Hwy. (Rt. 30). 610-363-7330; [BallAndBall.com](#).



Ball & Ball

610-363-7300 • [BallAndBall.com](#)

There's no place like [Ron's Original Bar & Grille](#) this holiday season! Offering a family atmosphere, Italian fare and some of the best craft beer around, they invite you to stop in for a bite, enjoy

some take-out, delivery or curbside pickup or call them to cater your next event! Eat Clean. Live Well. Feel Good. Ron's. 74 E. Uwchlan Ave. 610-594-9900; RonsOriginal.com.

Kennett Square

Using only the finest and freshest ingredients, highlighting the northern region of Italy, **La Verona** is committed to making your meal a memorable one, with professional service in a welcoming, vibrant, social atmosphere. They have a private dining area for parties up to 65, and takeout is available daily. 114 E. State St. 610-444-2244; LaVeronaPA.com.

Malvern

The holidays can be a hectic and stressful time of year. Let **Tonino's Pizza & Pasta Co.** take the worry out of planning your holiday gatherings with custom party platters featuring all your Italian favorites. They also offer private holiday dining following all social distancing guidelines. Tonino's Gift Certificates make a great gift that you can pick up at the restaurant. Delivery and curbside pick up are always available. 235 Lancaster Ave. 610-240-9566; ToninosPizzaAndPasta.com.

Marshallton

This holiday season, why not introduce some creativity, art, innovation and fun to your gift-giving? Visit the **Merchant of Menace Re-Imaginers Gallery** and check the whimsical and inventive items that will delight everyone! Their artists see possibilities everywhere and create amazing works from a variety of reclaimed materials. Find furniture crafted from New England barn wood, animal sculptures made from antique tractor parts, jewelry created from silverware and much more! 1351 W. Strasburg Rd. 215-704-7419; TheMerchantOfMenace.net.



Merchant of Menace Re-Imaginers Gallery
215-704-7419 • TheMerchantOfMenace.net

Newtown Square

Gourmet gift baskets and luscious fine chocolates are two reasons to stop at **Christopher Chocolates**, making life sweeter since 1986 as a family-owned and operated business. They have a great

selection of gourmet foods, candies, sugar-free items and fine chocolates for a customized gift basket to delight all on your list. Open daily from Thanksgiving to Christmas. 3519 West Chester Pk. (Rt. 3). 610-359-1669; Christopher-Chocolates.com.



Christopher Chocolates
610-359-1669 • Christopher-Chocolates.com

Get your Christmas plants and flowers at **Mostardi Nursery**. Featuring distinctive plants for every season, Mostardi offers a selection that will have your home looking greener and even better than last Christmas. The Christmas Shop features trees, wreaths, poinsettias, garden accents, ornaments and accessories. Mostardi is dedicated to providing avid gardeners and homeowners with plants for every season and every reason. 4033 West Chester Pk. (Rt. 3). 610-356-8035; Mostardi.com.



Mostardi Nursery
610-356-8035 • Mostardi.com

Paoli

Celebrating their 75th Anniversary, **Walter J. Cook Jeweler** is proud to continue providing signature personalized customer service. Their exquisite collection of exceptional jewels from around the world are personally curated by owner, Michael Cook. Dazzling diamonds, elegant one-of-a-kind colored gemstones and lustrous pearls in both classic and contemporary styles are artfully displayed in the showroom. Handcrafted gold and silver designs complete the collection again this year. Chestnut Village Shoppes. 610-644-5347; WalterJCookJeweler.com.



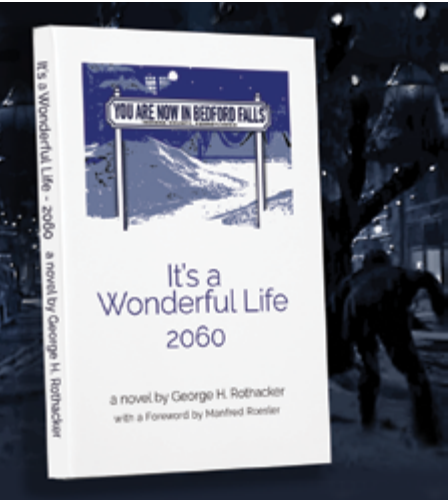
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Foresta's Market has all of your holiday favorites. Rib roasts and filet roasts using the tastiest Certified Angus Beef. Honey Baked Hams sliced to your liking, made with their homemade glaze, topped with a pineapple ring and cherry. For those in the mood for a holiday bird, Foresta's has Jaindl Grand Champion turkeys, ducks and geese. 1098 W. Bridge St. 610-935-1777; ForestasMarket.com.

One of the most perfect and thoughtful gifts of all may just be a gift card from **Steel City Coffeehouse & Brewery**. A Steel City gift card can be used for breakfast, lunch, coffee, housemade treats, retail purchases and even concert tickets and beer! Steel City has been serving the Phoenixville area for 25 years, and the food, beverages and entertainment are better than ever. Steel City is also available for private and non-private celebrations. 203 Bridge St. 484-924-8425; SteelCityCofeehouse.com.

Villanova

It's a Wonderful Life – 2060 is the latest novel by George H. Rothacker. The year is 2060, and Juniper Blakely, a fact checker, dreams of building the world's most complex model train layout, but then veers off in a direction that blends robotic technology into the classic holiday film, *It's a Wonderful Life*. The book focuses on how humans might deal with the world of tomorrow, and how new generations may retain a sense of purpose and fulfillment in a world dominated by robots. Available (signed) at Jimmy.org, at local independent book stores or on Amazon (paperback and Kindle editions).



It's Wonderful Life - 2060
610-220-9863 • IAWL-2060.com

Wayne

Located just outside Valley Forge National Historical Park, **Black Powder Tavern** combines local flavors with American history. The menu features a variety of small and entree-sized plates that pair well with the extensive craft beer offerings. Ask about private dining options for your holiday gathering. Open daily for Lunch and Dinner. Closed Monday. 1164 Valley Forge Rd. 610-293-9333; BlackPowderTavern.com.

West Chester

Kati Mac Floral Designs is a full service retail and event florist that offers an assortment of locally made gifts including candles, soaps, honey and more. They also offer a wide range of wreaths, evergreen boxes and of course floral arrangements—all made in house. Stop in today for all your holiday shopping needs! 36 S. High St. 610-431-9414; KatiMacFloralDesigns.com.



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The **Mediterranean** would like to thank the community for all the support shown through the pandemic. Even though prices are rising with inflation, The Mediterranean has tried their best to keep prices the same and to support other local businesses within the community. Stay healthy, stealthy, wealthy and BYOB! Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas! 150 W. Gay St. 610-431-7074; TheMedWCPA.com.

Looking for the perfect gift for the men in your life? Check out **Phineas Gage**, located in downtown West Chester, for a great assortment of men's contemporary clothing and accessories. They carry a great selection of denim, outerwear, shirts, sweaters and accessories. Let them help you pick the perfect gift to outfit your man from head to toe! 29 S. High St. 484-266-7344; Phineas-Gage.com.



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Pietro's Prime is an upscale yet casual Steakhouse and Martini Bar in the heart of downtown West Chester, known for their quality cuisine and remarkable service. Whether you're celebrating a milestone event or just looking for a delicious meal, Pietro's Prime is the place to go. 125 Market St. 484-760-6100; PietrosPrime.com.

Stop by **Rams Head Bar and Grill** this winter and enjoy some signature cocktails or their award-winning Filet Mignon Cheese-steak. Bring the family out for live music every Saturday, or hang out with your friends at Quizzo, every Wednesday at 9 p.m. Looking to book your holiday party? Call 484-631-0241 or visit RamsHeadBarAndGrill.com for more information.

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Holiday Tables

In past years we've shared ideas for decorating your holiday tree and festive holiday wreaths for your doors, windows or barn.

This year we gathered ideas of how to deck your table for the season.

Happy Holidays!



Festive holiday floral design and tealights add to your holiday entertaining with family and friends!

Heritage Design Interiors



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Adorn Goods



Keep your holiday gatherings simple. Coordinate colors on the table and serve simple dishes to delight your guests, allowing you time to enjoy each other's company.

Kim Morgan Designs



"THE ART OF TABLESCAPES"

One of six festive tables that's part of the 12th Notable Kitchen Tour and Chefs' Tastings fundraiser for the Philadelphia Orchestra. Visit on Facebook through March.

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KNIVES OUT

this Season

GIVE YOURSELF AN EDGE FOR CHRISTMAS. A SHARP EDGE.

Matt Freeman

IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON. A TIME OF FEASTING AND merriment and so forth.

But some of us, otherwise content and comfortable, don't anticipate preparing their own feast with any particular joy. That's because of a surprisingly common privation—we don't have knives that will cut stuff well.

Too many of us have a drawer full of knives, sharp when purchased, but now woefully dull. With meats, these old implements saw more than slice. And they don't cut a tomato as much as bludgeon it into submission. Cutting carrots makes a series of loud cracks as that old knife wedges through and whacks the cutting board.

This is a sad story for so many reasons. First of all, having sub-par knives is dangerous. The extra force needed to make dull knives cut can make them go out of control and cut *you*. Dull knives damage the ingredients. And some believe these unloved things take the joy out of cooking.

The knife is universally acknowledged to be a cook's most important tool—the “second most important tool in the kitchen, after your hands,” says Andrew Deery, chef/owner of Phoenixville's popular erstwhile restaurant Majolica.

Yet thousands of avid home cooks suffer with needlessly dull knives and have seemingly resigned to live with the situation.

But it doesn't have to be this way. It's easily fixable. If you've forgotten how nice it is to use a knife that glides effortlessly through your ingredients, read on.

GIVE YOURSELF AN EDGE

Start with a quality knife. If you need a good, starter kitchen knife, or want to get someone else one, you're in luck—professionals agree on how to begin.

- **What kind?** The 8-inch chef's knife is close to a universal recommendation as your main knife. But Chef Deery has some advice here: get a knife that's proportionate to you. Chef's knives are found from 6 inches to 10 and up, so get one that's the right size for you with a handle that feels comfortable. It should also feel balanced and nimble. This is personal, so try a few if possible.

Essentials also include a smaller knife, from a 3-inch to about a 5-inch blade, and maybe a serrated bread knife.

- **Which brands?** You can't go wrong with the big-name brands you see in kitchenware stores such as Williams-Sonoma and Sur la Table. Zwilling J.A. Henckels (two names, one company, long story) and Wüsthof are the big dogs, and they make fine but somewhat pricey knives. Their classic models typically run from \$150 to \$180+. But you'll go home with a very nice knife.

“If you're starting out on your knife quest, it's safest to stick with proven brands. There are real bargains around if you've done some research and know what you want in a knife.

If that seems like too much to pay, you're not alone. There's a crowded field of knives with more reasonable prices, slightly less history and tradition, and made not in Germany but Taiwan and other places. Less cachet. Just as good, if from the right outfit.

You can get a handsome, well-made knife that will work every bit as well as the big names for \$40 to \$50+. The Victorinox Fibrox is a widely popular chef's knife in this price range. There are also knives from Mercer Culinary, including the more traditional-looking Renaissance line and somewhat updated Genesis. Many culinary-school students get Mercers to use when they're starting out, so this brand meets that professional standard.

If you're starting out on your knife quest, it's safest to stick with proven brands. There are real bargains around if you've done some research and know what you want in a knife. (There are sub-\$20 knives that work as well as the pricier ones, but are made of softer steel that needs more frequent sharpening.) There are also mediocre knives that won't cut as well or hold an edge as long.

- **Tips and caveats.** Although trying out the knife is preferable, ordering online gives you many more choices. Online reviews abound and identify the various strengths and weaknesses. Don't pay much attention to people who insist you get a full-tang knife and that it has to be forged, not stamped. You don't even need to know what that means. Decades ago it might have meant something, but not now.

If you're buying for other people—a young person setting up fresh or a retiree getting into cooking—remember it's personal and consider gift cards or taking them on a knife-buying excursion. You might both come home with a lovely new blade.

- **About Japanese knives.** Bladesmithing is a centuries-old tradition in Japan, and Japanese knives, typically with harder steels that allow them to be thinner and sharper, are common in professional kitchens. These knives are migrating out to the home-cooking public.

Deery remembers his astonishment at the difference in performance the first time he tried one. “I cut with it, and it was a revelation,” he says. “It was night and day.”

In a store you'll likely see Japanese and Japanese-influenced knives for sale. The wildly popular “santoku” shape (straight edge with a narrow sheep's foot blade) is a good all-rounder, as is the “gyuto,” a Japanese interpretation of the European-style chef's knife. They're often quite beautiful, actually.

If you're intrigued, check them out, but remember a traditional German-style knife is usually made to be a bit tougher, and that's good to have in your collection, too.

The more you learn about this fascinating part of human history and daily life, the more you'll know which knives out there are right for you.

THE EASY WAY

Once you have a quality knife, the next lesson is simple—a modicum of maintenance. Professionals do it, home cooks who insist on sharp knives do it, and you can do it, too. It's easy.

The thing is, however sharp when new, all knives get dull with use. It just happens more slowly with good ones made of a suitable steel.

- **Honing rod.** The first step to better knives is to lengthen the time between sharpenings by using a ceramic (not steel) honing rod



every two or three days or whenever the knife is getting a bit dull. This will straighten out the knife's edge, make it cut more efficiently again, and does some actual sharpening as well. (Old-school steel honing rods just straighten the edge, not sharpen it.) Ceramic honing rods are easy to use. Check online for instructional videos, and you'll be good to go. It's simple, really.

- **Washing and storing.** The only other important day-to-day maintenance needed is to wash the knife by hand and dry it off, then put it away in some sort of dedicated knife holder or with a blade guard at least. Don't just bung it in a drawer with a lot of other metal stuff banging into it.

And for goodness' sake, don't put a good knife in the dishwasher, where banging, heat and chemicals will damage the handle and steel. Just wash it by hand. It won't take a minute, as in it literally will not take 60 seconds to do.

- **Cutting boards.** You can also preserve that knife's edge by using a wood (not bamboo) cutting board. Bamboo has abrasive particles in it. Surfaces like granite, marble and glass will kill the edge very quickly. Plastic is OK, if you must, but isn't wood just nicer?

- **Professional sharpening.** Eventually, though, through use the knife will become noticeably duller and the honing rod won't bring it back as well. Time to get your knife sharpened.

The easiest way by far is to get your knife sharpened professionally. Sur la Table in King of Prussia will sharpen it professionally and overnight for \$5. Same deal at the Williams Sonoma stores in King of Prussia, Christiana and Cherry Hill Malls (but unfortunately, not Glen Mills).

Lots of local people also offer sharpening services. And there's even an outfit called Knife Aid that will send you a mailer and send back your newly sharpened knives.

Long story short, it's easy. It's like going to a dry cleaner. Drop it off, pick it up like new.

OR THE HARDER WAY

If you want, though, you can take care of sharpening yourself.

Let's look at the options in order of increasing effort involved. You're already honing, right? Great.

The next step in actual sharpening involves a manual or electric pull-through sharpener.

You'll get good results with the better models from name brands, prominent among which is the locally born Chef's Choice. A good manual pull-through model might cost around \$40, with electric versions running higher. It's not the gentlest way to sharpen, and Chef Deery says he hasn't ever used one, but allows as how they're "probably better than nothing."

The next step up, both in quality and ease of use, involves guided sharpening systems. These are tabletop jigs that hold the knife steady and hold abrasive strips at various set angles to it so you can put on a new and, from practiced hands, excellent edge. They start at around \$40 or \$50.

In what's called "freehand" sharpening, you mostly use whetstones—rectangular blocks of natural or artificial abrasives—to grind that new edge. Here, you have to learn to hold the knife at a steady angle as you move it across the stone. It takes a bit of muscle memory and some time practicing, but the versatility is far greater, the pride of accomplishment greater too, and if you tend to be a do-it-yourselfer and enjoy learning new stuff, it's actually kind of fun.

There are hours of online videos demonstrating how it's done, and the best idea is to check out a few to see if it's something you'd like to try. You can get an inexpensive starter stone from—where else?—Mercer. You'll want the 400/1000 grit combo stone. (Just trust us. It'll all make sense eventually.)

If you decide that's not for you, no problem. The main thing is to find yourself a good knife or two or three, find some way to maintain them, and then find that cooking is a lot more gratifying than it used to be.

"It'll vastly improve your food and experience while cooking," Deery says. Vastly. Improve. We're just saying. ♦



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Happier Holidays Gift Guide

SIP SOME HOLIDAY CHEER

Jessica Roberts



AS THE COMING HOLIDAYS APPROACH, WE'RE all looking for special treats for those we hold dear. Yet many of us struggle when it comes to picking the perfect present for that special someone.

To take some of the guesswork out of the search, we've collected a few foolproof suggestions. These choices are so good, you may end up buying a few bottles for yourself!

FOUR WINES

Let's start off this gift guide with a perennial favorite—wine! There's so much to choose from in terms of wine for every taste and price point, so there's no need to limit yourself to these four suggestions, as enticing and unforgettable as they may be.

Sweet, spunky and spirited, the **Albino Rocca Moscato d'Asti** is perfect for anyone who loves a touch of floral fragrance and sugar in their glass. From the Asti region of Italy, this wine can be enjoyed on its own as an after-dinner treat or alongside any dish that boasts a bit of a kick. At a price point of \$12, it's something you could very well pick up for everyone in the family!

Many people have extreme views about rosé wine, and it's time to debunk the negative stigma surrounding a nice, dry rosé. A good place to start is with **Maison Saint AIX Rosé**, priced at \$18. This wine is from Provence, France, the mecca of the rosé world and produced by a company that's 140 years old—clear evidence that they know their stuff when it comes to producing a high-quality wine. This rosé's blend of grenache, syrah and cinsault creates a wine full of red berries, fresh florals and singing acidity. It's a perfect food wine for almost anything you place on your table this season.

A cold day begs for a hefty, soul-warming cabernet, like the reds coming from Washington state. Try, for example, **Ten Thousand Hours Cabernet Sauvignon**, priced at \$30 for the 2018, to savor this winter. After aging for 18 months in oak, this wine is packed full of toasty, chewy tannins and dark fruit with a hint of vanilla. You'll surely be going back for a second glass of this impressive red wine.

Let's end the wine suggestions the same way as we'll end the year—with a bottle of bubbles. Champagne is the go-to for a traditional New Year's Eve, yet many prefer to find quality bubbles at a more affordable price. Then Spanish Cava is what you need.

At \$30, the **Segura Viudas Cava Brut Reserva** is a steal of a deal. It has all the body, flavor and finesse of a high-end bubbly without breaking the budget. You can even skip the bow because this bottle is gorgeous on its own. This Cava will be the talk of the night, guaranteed.

SOME SPIRITS

Brighten your spirits with, well, some spirits. Are you looking for a little more kick in your glass? Look no further because here are some specialty picks!

1. Albino Rocca Moscato d'Asti
2. Maison Saint AIX Rosé
3. Ten Thousand Hours Cabernet Sauvignon
4. Segura Viudas Cava Brut Reserva



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

5. Wheatley Vodka
6. Italicus Rosolio di Bergamotto
7. Branson Phantom VS Cognac
8. Method and Madness' Single Malt Irish Whiskey

Heard of Buffalo Trace? You have if you've been on the search for their many bourbons. But did you know the company makes a vodka as well? Unfortunately, this special product is often overlooked in favor of their whiskeys.

Wheatley Vodka is, not surprisingly, a wheat-based spirit that's been ten times distilled and filtered through limestone, resulting in one smooth vodka. It's very affordable at \$17. Sip this on ice or mix with your favorite flavored seltzer or mixer for a refreshing cocktail from a fabled distiller.

Speaking of a nice spritzer, have you tried **Italicus Rosolio di Bergamotto**? This cordial is great "treat yourself" item. Although it's a bit pricey at \$40, you'll enjoy the elegance of the bottle and flavor that follows. This bergamot liquor is bursting with herbal and floral spices that are divine. Add an ounce or two to your favorite bubbly and watch the sparks fly. It's heaven in a glass.

Enough of the light and bright drinks.

How about something in your glass to warm you up by the fire-place? Wine lovers may gravitate toward the grape-based spirit of brandy. If you're looking for something a bit more intriguing, look for a brandy specifically from the Cognac region of France.

An excellent example is **Branson Phantom VS Cognac**, priced around \$50. This is lovely for sipping while watching the snow fall

from the comfort of your home. Not only is this appealing to drink, but the sleek black bottle makes an attractive gift as well!

Searching for a splurge purchase? Get the top end of **Method and Madness' Single Malt Irish Whiskey**, priced at \$85. Aged for 14 years in former bourbon barrels, this whiskey has so much character that many find it hard to pass up. This was a limited production product that's just been released for the first time in several years, so be sure to snatch up a bottle before it's gone!

Here's hoping you've found something to help you with your gift list. As always, if you have any questions or need more guidance, please visit your local wine and spirits experts.

Stay safe, enjoy responsibly, and have a lovely end of your year! Cheers! ♦

Jessica Roberts has worked with Fine Wine & Good Spirits for six years, taking the position of Wine Specialist a year and a half ago. What began as a hobby soon blossomed into a satisfying career. Jessica works at the Premium Collection store in Phoenixville. Stop by for one of her tastings or just to ask a question. Learn more at FWGS.com.



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FOOD • SPIRITS

[Food News]

A few of our favorite things to share this month about local food and drink

Duck, Duck ... Goose?

The most popular main dish for Christmas? In southeastern PA, **goose is the most popular holiday entrée**, with turkey as #1 to the west and roast pork to the north.



Foresta's Market in Phoenixville sells geese for those who didn't bag their holiday meal during hunting season. Or check out local farms for a fresh bird, including Canter Hill Farm in Malvern and Lindenhof Farm in Kirkland. *Foresta-Market.com. CanterHillFarm.org. LindenhofFarm.com.*

Choo Choo Chocolate.

A chocolate production kitchen at the Malvern train station, who knew? **Valentine Chocolate Co.** has created confections—caramel, chia, passionfruit and more in pieces, truffles and mendians—since 2018. A former pastry chef (Sweet Daddy's plus Fearless Restaurant Group), Sandra Valentine now turns out luxury treats using high-end French chocolate (think Valrhona). Available at select farmers markets, Craft and Mercantile events and Malvern's station, where you can also grab coffee and a pastry. *13 W. King St. ValentineChocolateCo.com.*



New Slice.

A piece of New York is coming hot out of the brick oven to West Chester with toasty thin-crust goodness. **Pizza West Chester** is a one-man show bringing thin-slice style pie in plain or pepperoni. Perfecting one craft and bringing back traditional pizza making, this pizza parlor currently serves up pizzas in store, cash only, with no phone orders. \$4/plain slice, \$20/plain pie. Follow on Instagram for details, @PizzaWestChester. 136 E. Market St. *PizzaWestChester.com.*

Pomegranate Luck.

Featured in countless Greek and Roman myths, **pomegranates** have long represented the divine and been linked with good fortune—Greeks smashed the seed for luck during New Year's celebrations. Smashing seeds may get messy, so try using pomegranates in New Year's **good-luck cocktails**. Pomegranate juice (fresh or bottled) can be the base for a tart cosmo or bubbly mimosa, with a few seeds added for luck. Bring the kiddos luck with pomegranate juice and OJ for something nonalcoholic.



Winter Ice.

Sub-freezing temps won't stop those yearning for an icy treat. Satisfy your cravings at Oxford's **La Lupita Ice Cream Shop**, newly opened and family run by Omar Sanchez and his parents, and named after Omar's grandmother who loved ice cream. Defy the chill and choose from more than 20 flavors, including a brand new hot chocolate option. Pick your usual or something exotic, like gansito (Mexican snack cake) or mamey (Mexican-Caribbean fruit). Open year round, 7 days a week. *417 Market St.*



Spirited Cooking

USE UNIQUE FLAVORS OF LOCAL LIQUOR TO ADD CHEER TO HOLIDAY DISHES

Alyssa Thayer

DURING THE HOLIDAYS WE LIKE TO JAZZ things up and add a little something extra. One way is certainly by mixing up a good Moscow mule or hot toddy. But there's yet another way to enjoy added cheer (without the hangover) and that's through the art of cooking.

Alcohol is a natural amplifier of flavor and aromas. Its molecular composition can bond to both water and fat, allowing it to enhance the sweetness of tomatoes in a vodka sauce and the gamey notes of a venison stew. And it's not just the novel chemical properties that make it a key component of any culinary arsenal—darker liquors boast some of the most complex and unique flavors you can find.

That rich earthy taste is no accident. For craft distillers like Max Pfeffer, Head Distiller of **Manatawny Still Works** in Pottstown, everything they do from selecting the grains to malting, roasting, distilling and aging builds towards that final coveted flavor profile.

Max, a chemical engineering major, postponed getting a “boring job” by enrolling in the Master Brewers Program at UC Davis. He was the lead brewer for Sly Fox Brewing before making the move to hard liquor.

Max says the transition was actually fairly simple, explaining the type of malty whiskey he creates is really just distilled beer. “I was halfway there because I knew how to handle a brewhouse and fermentation. I just had to figure out the distilling and barrel-aging part.”

Eight years later, Max still says he's learning each day. But he's already made quite a mark on the craft distilling scene, with award-winning non-traditional whiskey (a unique blend of barley, wheat, oats and rye) and imaginative flavor combinations (including El Murcielago, whiskey aged in tequila barrels). Max and his team are constantly tinkering and innovating and the result is an impressively deep lineup of best-in-class spirits, ranging from gin and rum to their well-recognized line of grain whiskey.

“We're not just trying to emulate what the big guys are doing, but rather, make our own craft whiskey,” says Max proudly. Not only has Manatawny succeeded in developing quite a following, they have also caught the attention of bakers, chefs, cheesemakers and more. “Chefs just taste something and become inspired,” says Max on how the various partnerships came to be.

Even if you aren't one to sit down with a low ball of whiskey (or even if you are), the deep complex flavors may just be that secret ingredient that puts your glazed ham or peach cobbler right over the top. The trick is figuring out which type of spirit to use, when to add it, and how much to add.

Check out our tips in this article to help you create a deliciously spirited holiday season.

To happier holidays!



Distillery barrels at Manatawny Still Works



Distillery

Rum Poached Pears

While this dessert may seem simple, the flavors blend together into something rich, sweet and complex. Want to spread the cheer? Make these pears as a delicious food gift. Simply place finished pears into a mason jar with a note on how to warm and enjoy them with ice cream/toppings.



4 pears, just ripe, peeled (we used bosc, but any variety works)
 ¼ C. brown coconut sugar (can sub with regular brown sugar)
 ½ tsp. cinnamon
 ¼ tsp. allspice grated
 ¼ C. butter
 ⅓ C. dark rum (highly recommend the new Vanilla Rum from Manatawny Still Works)
 1 tsp. vanilla extract
 ¼ C. maple syrup
 Pinch of salt

Optional Toppings:

Scoop of vanilla or butter pecan ice cream
 Drizzle of melted dark chocolate
 Toasted chopped nuts or crunchy granola

Preheat oven to 375°.

Slice pears in half and remove core. (Whether you remove the stem is up to you. It can look pretty for presentation.) Place core-side-up in a large baking dish.

Tip: If pears are rolling around too much, slice a sliver off the back/curved side to allow them to lay flat.

In a small bowl, mix sugar, spices and salt, and set aside. Dice butter into small pieces, and set aside.

Generously sprinkle dry mixture over all of the pears, making sure they get a good coating. Next, distribute small pieces of butter onto the pears (dab if soft).

Add rum, vanilla and maple syrup to a small saucepan and bring to a low simmer. Stir and simmer for 5 minutes. Then spoon or pour liquid over the pears.

Cover with a lid or aluminium foil and bake for 30 minutes or until pears are soft but not mushy (can be up to 45 minutes if using

Cooking with spirits 101

Here are a few ideas to add some extra cheer for the holidays.

Flavor Maker – Alcohol has unique chemical properties that allow it to help bring out the flavors already present in a dish. The first property is its ability to bond to both fat and water, which helps it gather the full power of fat-soluble (spices, herbs, alliums), water-soluble (fruits, vegetables) and alcohol-soluble (tomato enzymes).

Taig Time – One of the keys to getting that smooth rich flavor and not an abrasive alcoholic one, is time. It takes a fair bit of time for alcohol to cook out of a dish completely. So if you want the alcohol content to be low, make sure you're adding your booze to recipes that require long simmering or baking.

Dark vs. Light – The type of liquor you choose should play nicely with the ingredients of the meal. For example, dark liquor tends to go well with red meats, apples, pears and dried fruit, while light liquors accompany the lighter/brighter notes of seafood, chicken and tropical fruits.

All Ways! A little booze can really send the senses soaring in these flavor-filled applications:

- **Marinade or Brine** – Flavors will really pop with the addition of a touch of the right hard liquor. That said, be careful not to add too much or you risk changing the texture of the meat.

- **Deglaze** – Not only does it help de-stick those caramelized delicious bits of aromatics or meat left on the pan, the alcohol, once simmered for a minute or two, is cooked out and the wonderful rich notes of the liquor will marry into your sauce.

- **Poaching/Stewing** – In this preparation, apples and pears soften nicely and drink up the flavors they're cooked in. Plus, the poaching liquid (if sweetened) can be boiled down into a syrup to be drizzled over your final dish.

- **Soaking/Macerating** – For a little extra zing, you can soak sliced fruit or berries without cooking them. This allows them to take on all the flavors without losing the freshness. This preparation carries the full alcohol content of what is added since it's not heated.

- **Spike It** – Of course the obvious option is a spiked cocktail, but that isn't all you can spike—try sorbets, popsicles, custards and more can all get a little extra cheer.

- **Jam It Out** – You can also make some delicious fruit butters using hard liquor (darker liquors tend to do better). Mix in with your fruit of choice and some warm spices and you'll have yourself something deep, rich and gourmet.

- **Vodka Pie Crust** – According to trusted baking sources, a little vodka in your pie crust keeps it moist and easy to work with. No one will ever know your magic trick since it all cooks out and disappears in the baking process.

less ripe pears). Remove cover, baste with juices and return to the oven to cook uncovered for 10 more minutes at 400° or until pears are lightly browned on top.

Serve warm with a scoop of ice cream and your toppings of choice. Serves 4–6.

Note: If the sauce is still a little too boozy for your liking, simply add it to a heavy bottomed saucepan and simmer until more alcohol is removed (about 20 minutes), being mindful not to let it burn.

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Apple Brandy Fondue

There's something magical about a dip and devour meal like fondue for dinner. Customize your dippers to your fancy, and dust off that old fondue pot, It's show time!



- 1 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 C. dry white wine
- 1 Tb. lemon juice
- 6 oz. Gruyere cheese, shredded
- 4 oz. Emmentaler or baby Swiss cheese, shredded
- 4 oz. Gouda cheese, shredded
- 2 Tb. cornstarch
- ¼ C. apple brandy
- ¼ tsp. grated nutmeg
- Pinch of black pepper

Cheese note: It's important to get higher quality cheese for this so it melts well. This is not a place to go low or fat free!

Dippers:

- 1-inch cubes of crusty baguette or sourdough bread
- Steamed/Roasted broccoli, carrots, cauliflower or other veggies
- Fresh/sliced apple, pear, bell peppers
- Boiled new potatoes

In a heavy bottom pot, add olive oil and garlic. Saute over medium heat until garlic is soft and fragrant (1–2 minutes). Add wine and lemon juice and bring to a light simmer (medium heat).

Slowly start adding cheese, one handful at a time, continuously stirring and only adding more once the previous handful has melted.

Whisk cornstarch into brandy until dissolved completely and add to cheese mixture. Cook until cheese is melted and smooth.

Top with nutmeg and black pepper.

Serve warm with an assortment of dipping options.

Words to the wise: Don't let the cheese get too hot! If heat is too high, the cheese will scorch and then separate. There's no coming back from that.

Other fixes:

- Too thin? Add more cheese.
- Too thick? Add a splash of wine or lemon juice.
- Separating? Add more dissolved cornstarch.
- No fondue pot? Try preparing it on the stovetop and then transferring to a preheated crock pot (set to high).

Serves 6.

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Baked Brie

Yes, we admit, these recipes are a bit cheese-heavy. But hey, it's the holidays—there are no rules. The sweet and savory creation pairs the unctuous gooeiness of warm brie with the crunch of the walnuts. It will have your guests begging for the recipe. It's your choice whether you want to share it.



- ½ C. walnuts or pecans, chopped
- 1 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 Tb. honey/maple whiskey
- 2 tsp. honey
- ½ tsp. fresh rosemary, minced (1 sprig)
- 8-oz. wheel of brie

Preheat oven to 375°.

Start by toasting nuts and setting aside. (You can do this either on stovetop over medium heat, being careful not to burn, or, in a single layer in the oven at 375° for 10 minutes.)

Add olive oil to a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Once warm, add garlic and stir until soft and fragrant (1 minute). Add

whiskey and honey and stir until fully combined and warmed (another minute).

Pull from heat and allow to cool.

Once whiskey mixture has cooled, add chopped nuts and rosemary to it and stir.

Carefully slice the top off the brie, exposing the soft sticky inside. Place the brie cut-side-up in a bake-proof pie dish or skillet and Spoon nut and whiskey mixture over top.

Place in the oven and bake for 10 minutes or until the cheese is warmed through and sauce is bubbling.

Enjoy warm with sliced baguette or crispy flatbreads.

Serves 6–8.

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Apricot Whiskey Meatballs

These flavorful gems are a simple case of a kicked-up classic. The savory notes pair well with the sweetness of the maple and apricot and are given depth and complexity with the earthy whiskey notes.



Meatballs:

- 2 Tb. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ lb. ground pork
- ½ lb. ground beef (used 90/10, but 80/20 is fine)
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp. coarse salt
- ⅓ C. bread crumbs
- 1 egg
- 2 Tb. chopped parsley
- 2 Tb. high-heat cooking oil

Sauce:

- 1 Tb. olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ⅓ C. whiskey

- ½ C. apricot preserves
- ¼ C. maple syrup
- 1 C. ketchup
- 2 Tb. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. Ancho Chile
- 1 Tb. sherry vinegar (apple cider is good, too)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°.

Saute onion in olive oil over medium-high heat until soft and beginning to brown. Add into a large bowl and allow to cool.

Once onions have cooled, add the rest of the meatball ingredients, except cooking oil, and use your hands to combine well. Shape into small cocktail-size meatballs, and set on a large plate.

Heat cooking oil in saute pan over medium-high heat. Cook meatballs in batches to ensure they brown well. Use tongs to turn and brown on each side (5–7 minutes total). Transfer first batch of browned meatballs to a cookie sheet and repeat browning steps for each of the following batches.

Once all meatballs have been browned, place them into the hot oven for 10 minutes or until cooked through (no pink when cut open).

Begin your sauce in the same saute pan. Turn heat down to medium-low and add oil.

Add minced garlic to warmed oil, stirring until fragrant (about 1 minute).

Next, deglaze with whiskey. Add remaining sauce ingredients, bring heat back up to medium and allow sauce to simmer and the flavors to meld (10 minutes).

Gently add finished meatballs into simmering sauce and toss gently before serving.

Makes about 30 cocktail-sized meatballs. ♦

Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.



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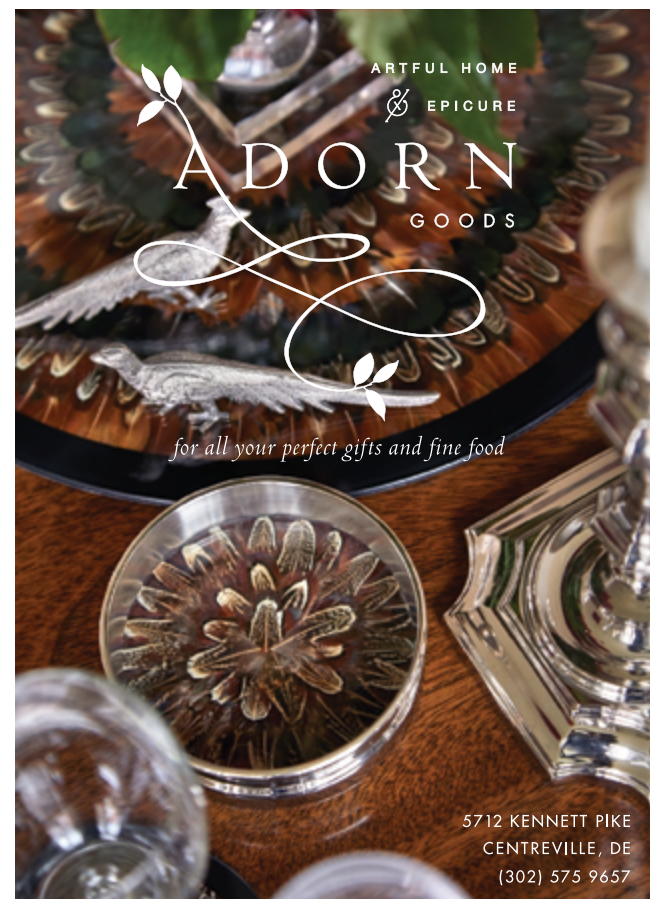
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