

DECEMBER 2024

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CONNECTIONS MAGAZINE

Happy Holidays

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See our White Hot Chocolate Recipe on page 10.

INSIDE:
EVERYTHING
HOLIDAY



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DEC 5TH, 12TH & 19TH | 2 PM
THE SETTLERS INN

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS DINNER
DEC 6TH - 8TH | 5:30 PM - 9 PM
THE SETTLERS INN

CHOCOLATE & COFFEE TASTING
DEC 13TH | 1-3 PM
COCOON COFFEEHOUSE & BAKERY

WINTERFEST ARTISAN FAIR
DEC 14TH - 15TH | 10 AM - 5 PM
HAWLEY SILK MILL

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA
DEC 14TH | 10 AM - NOON
THE WATERFRONT AT
SILVER BIRCHES

WINTERFEST BRUNCH
DEC 14TH - 15TH | 11:30 AM - 2 PM
THE SETTLERS INN

BRUNCH WITH SANTA
DEC 15TH | 11AM - 2 PM
HOTEL ANTHRACITE

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATIONS
DECEMBER 31ST
THE SETTLERS INN
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CONNECT

DECEMBER 2024

FEATURES

6 HANDY HACKS TO TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF HOLIDAY HOSTING

Hosting is a big responsibility, especially during the holidays when the pressure is on to create a magical and memorable experience. Planning a menu and decorating for the occasion are just the start.

8 SAVORY CHEESE BALLS

It's the holiday season, and your family can feel the cheer as loved ones fill their appetizer plates. Excitement fills the air as gifts are being placed beneath the tree.

10 WHITE HOT CHOCOLATE

When it's cold outside, start up the fireplace, get your favorite slippers on, wrap up in a warm blanket and snuggle on the couch with this delicious White Hot Chocolate.

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CONNECTIONS Magazine

president • publisher • editor in chief
deborah bailey

production manager
meica drake

account representative
barry weiss

editorial correction services
kay marks

contributing writers

michael krupa, *Finance*

terri schlichenmeyer, *Book Review*

la guzda, *Pocono Secrets*

pike/wayne conservation partnership, *Living Green*

disaster blaster, *Home Tips*

mrs. dogood, *Letters*

lisa a. dorn, M.S.N., C.R.N.P., *Health*

CONNECTIONS Magazine

3305 Lake Ariel Highway
Honesdale, PA 18431
570.647.0085 • Fax 570.647.0086
cmag@ptd.net • thinkconnections@yahoo.com
www.connections-magazine.com

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WHAT A DILEMMA

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk rejection.
To place your visions before the crowd is to risk ridicule.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
****To go forward in the face of overwhelming odds is to risk failure.**
But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.
We may avoid suffering and sorrow, but we cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love or know GOD.
Chained by our own self-assurances, we are a slave. We have forfeited our freedom.
Only the person who dares to take risks and to trust in their GOD will ever be made FREE.

In 1997, Rev. Edwin E. Bailey, father of the editor, gave this poem to his daughter 8 days before he had a stroke and 3 weeks before he died. The poem was adapted from works by Leo Buscaglia. Edwin hand wrote this on a scrap of paper and gave it to his daughter, Deborah, saying the words, "Someday you'll understand these words and use them. God bless sweetheart." **These words were used in making the decision to purchase Connections Magazine in 2002.

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“Blessed is the season
which engages the
whole world in a
conspiracy of love.”
– *Hamilton Wright Mabie*

Make this time of year a magical and memorable experience. We know hosting is a big responsibility, especially during the holidays when the pressure is on. We’ve got handy hacks to take the stress out of holiday hosting on page 6. Start by simply planning a menu and decorating for the occasion.

Say cheese in December as loved ones fill their appetizer plates, and excitement fills the air as gifts are being placed beneath the tree. We’ve got a savory way to start holiday celebrations on page 8.

When it’s cold outside, start up the fireplace, get your favorite slippers on, wrap up in a warm blanket and snuggle on the couch with our delicious White Hot Chocolate recipe on page 10.

There’s a growing trend towards giving “experiences” rather than a tangible gift. What an incredible way to show our loved ones just how much they mean to us, during the holidays and all year round! Forget the winter’s nap and make the winter solstice a time to breathe in deeply that crisp, cold air and find a new trail to explore, a new summit to reach. We’ve got suggestions for you on page 14.

Wishing you a blessed holiday season full of love, laughter and family.

The CM Team
570.647.0085
cmag@ptd.net





Handy Hacks to Take the Stress Out of Holiday

Hosting

Hosting is a big responsibility, especially during the holidays when the pressure is on to create a magical and memorable experience. Planning a menu and decorating for the occasion are just the start.

*Family Features | #17239 | Source: Finish
Photo courtesy of Shutterstock*

Hosting also means ensuring all dishes are cooked to perfection and kept warm until serving time, guests' dietary needs are considered and table conversation topics are ready. Then, of course, there's the post-dinner cleanup.

This holiday season, consider these tips to help tackle your hosting duties with grace and create an event you can enjoy, too.

Request RSVPs

Planning a party is even more complicated when you don't know how many guests you'll be entertaining. If you create a guest list and ask invitees to let you know their plans, you'll have a better idea whether

you should double your favorite dishes. You'll also know who has special dietary needs and be able to plan a seating chart that puts everyone at ease. Be sure to include a date that gives guests a specific RSVP deadline and plenty of time for you to adjust your plans before the big day.

Meal Prep as Much as Possible

Get as much of the food preparation out of the way ahead of time as you can. Some dishes can be prepared and even cooked ahead of time so you're just reheating, but you can also save a lot of time by organizing ingredients for the dishes that must be prepared the day of the event. A good rule of thumb: If it doesn't have to wait until the day of the party, do it before. That frees up your time so you can handle any unexpected hiccups that arise without piling on more stress.

Simplify the Cleanup Situation

Rely on tried-and-true products that do the heavy lifting for you when it's time to clean up after the meal. An option like Finish Ultimate Dishwashing Detergent cleans dishes in tough conditions, even without pre-rinsing, so you can focus on what matters during this time of year: spending more time with your loved ones. It removes tough stains like grease and cheese, as well as common holiday dishes like apple pie and mac and cheese. An added bonus: Since you don't need to pre-rinse, you'll save up to 20 gallons of water per dishwasher load.

Create Designated Spaces

Guests are likely to arrive with items in hand that need a place to go, like coats, shoes, handbags and gifts. Avoid clutter by determining ahead of time where you want to put these items. If you have a coat closet with space, that's a good solution, but a nearby bedroom may also be an option. Especially if you're hosting a potluck meal, be sure to plan ahead for where each course should go, with appetizer bars, dessert tables and a countertop with protective pads for warm foods.

Send Guests Off with a Parting Gift

A memorable event can be made even more so when guests have a token to take with them. Send everyone home on a happy note with a simple gift like a prewrapped holiday treat. Be sure to tuck these away someplace near the door so they're a pleasant surprise you can access easily when guests begin to make their exits.

Find more ways to tackle holiday messes and make hosting duties a breeze by visiting finishdishwashing.com.

Post-Party Cleaning Tips

- 1} Don't be afraid to ask for help, especially from your partner or children.
- 2} Prep your table the night before. Get sparkling dishes and glassware by using a product such as Finish Jet-Dry Rinse Aid, which assists in drying and helping your dishes shine when used in the rinse cycle.
- 3} Start by collecting trash and clutter. Throw trash away and create piles of items that need returned to their proper places. Remember that taking a few extra minutes to organize things like seasonal decor as you go can help make next year's event easier.
- 4} Complete each job before moving to the next. Some prefer to tackle a room at a time while others prefer to finish a specific chore, like sweeping the floors throughout the house, before moving on.
- 5} Be realistic about what must be done before you sleep. Some tasks really do need immediate attention, like collecting and emptying glasses that could be spilled and safely storing leftover food. The rest can likely wait until after you get some rest.



Savory **Cheese Balls**

**A Savory Way to Start
Holiday Celebrations**

It's the holiday season and your family can feel the cheer as loved ones fill their appetizer plates and excitement fills the air as gifts are being placed beneath the tree.

Someone asks, munching away near the table, "Wow, how did you make this?" In your mind, you think, "It was too easy."

These Savory Cheese Balls are not only simple to make but perfect for any holiday get-together or celebration. They're fun to create and even more enjoyable to dive into once finished. Texture and color are the name of the game with this recipe. The result is a beautiful array of red, gold and green, all on one plate.

Start by rolling cream cheese into balls and mixing up three bowls with powerful flavors to create the three different colors. The "green" bowl gets parsley, thyme, rosemary and, of course, some garlic, just for an extra kick of seasoning. The "gold" ball calls for caraway seeds, poppy seeds and garlic. Finally, the "red" ball includes cranberries and pecans.

Simply roll each cream cheese ball around gently until it's coated. It doesn't get any simpler than that. Display the array of cheese balls on a festive plate for something equally cheery and heavenly. Serve the plate with crackers, fruit or vegetables for complementary dipping options.

Find more recipes and holiday fun this season at Culinary.net.



Savory Cheese Balls

Servings: 6-12

- 2 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons caraway seeds
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 2 cloves garlic, minced, divided
- 1/4 cup parsley, chopped
- 2 teaspoons thyme leaves, chopped
- 1 teaspoon rosemary, chopped
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries, chopped
- 2 tablespoons pecans, chopped
- crackers (optional)
- fruit (optional)
- vegetables (optional)

Cut each cream cheese block into three squares. Roll each square into ball.

In small bowl, combine caraway seeds, poppy seeds and half the garlic.

In second small bowl, combine parsley, thyme, rosemary and remaining garlic.

In third small bowl, combine cranberries and pecans.

Roll two cheese balls in seed mixture, two in herb mixture and two in cranberry mixture.

Cut each ball in half and serve with crackers, fruit or vegetables, if desired.

#14867 | Source: Culinary.net

White Hot Chocolate

When it's cold outside, start up the fire-place, get your favorite slippers on, wrap up in a warm blanket and snuggle on the couch with this delicious White Hot Chocolate. Find more recipes at Culinary.net.

3 cups half & half
2/3 cup white chocolate baking pieces
1 3 inch cinnamon stick
1/8 tsp ground nutmeg
1 tsp vanilla
1/4 tsp almond extract
Ground Cinnamon (optional)
Whipped Cream (optional)

In a medium saucepan combine 1/4 of the half & half, white chocolate baking pieces, cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Stir over low to medium heat until white chocolate is melted.

Add remaining half & half. Stir and cook until heated through. Remove from heat. Discard cinnamon stick.

Add in vanilla and almond extract. Stir until mixed through.

Pour into your favorite mug(s). Top with whipped cream and sprinkle with ground cinnamon.

Recipe adapted from Better Homes and Gardens Cookbook.

Free Winter Concerts



Sunday December 1st
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2:30 PM

Saturday December 14th
Winterfest
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2:00 PM

Saturday December 21st
Holiday Concert
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What snow accumulation can tell you about your *PROPERTY*

Provided by Disaster Blaster

Did you know that how snow accumulates on your home can actually tell you a lot about your property, including how well (or poorly) it handles the winter weather, and how energy efficient it is?

Here are a few things you can look for and why they're important:

Does snow tend to melt off your roof before your neighbor's roof?

This could be caused by heat loss!

While there are a few factors that could cause this, including your roof getting more sun exposure than your neighbor's, a common cause is actually heat loss through your attic. This can not only cost you a lot of money in energy costs each winter but can cause your home to be colder and even result in damage to your roof or siding.

What can you do about it? Many homeowners may instinctively react by insulating the ceiling of their attics, and this could be a big mistake. While it will likely stop the snow from melting on your roof, you're actually fixing the wrong problem (and potentially creating another one). Instead of insulating the ceiling of the attic and trapping the warm air inside your attic space, it's recommended to insulate the floor of your attic so you're keeping the heat in your living space instead. Properly insulating your attic will keep your living space warmer, save you money on your energy costs, and extend the life of your roof.

Do you have a lot of icicles accumulating along your roof line?

Your gutters could be clogged!

You may think your gutters are just important when it rains, but they actually serve an important purpose in the winter, where they will divert snow and ice melt when it's melting off of your roof. If your gutters are clogged or damaged, you can not only have an accumulation of icicles along your roof line but also ice dams and roof leaks.

What can you do about it? It's recommended to clean your gutters each fall to ensure that they aren't clogged and can work efficiently. If your gutters are high or difficult to reach, it is recommended to hire a professional to perform this cleaning for you. During your annual cleaning, you should also look for any signs of damage that may have occurred to your gutters so that any issues discovered can be repaired as well.

Do you have thick layers of snow that accumulate on your roof?

Your roof may not be graded properly!

While you should expect to have some snow cover on your roof during the winter, thick layers of snow can be a problem as it adds significant weight to your roof that could damage structural members, attic framing, and result in roof leaks.

What can you do about it? If your roof is not graded properly, you may need to have a roofer repair, or even redesign, the pitch of your roof. Flat roofs may require additional draining or maintenance each year to avoid additional damage.

Does snow accumulate against the side of your house?

This could cause foundation damage or moisture intrusion!

If you notice snow drifts up against your home, this could be a sign of a few issues, including an exterior grading issue or landscaping problems. The reason this is such a concern is because that accumulation of snow can cause damage to decks, siding, and even your foundation.

What can you do about it? In the short term, you can shovel this accumulation away from your home to prevent moisture intrusion and winter weather damage, but long term you may want to review the grading of your property and landscaping with an excavation company or landscaper. They should be able

to evaluate your property and make recommendations to prevent or reduce large amounts of snow accumulation against your property in the future.

Do you notice a lot of condensation on windows?

You likely have a humidity issue!

Humidity in the air will naturally condense on cold surfaces like your windows. If not addressed properly, this moisture condensation can run into wall cavities where it can cause water damage and mold growth. In fact, while this may seem like an unlikely issue, it's unfortunately a common cause of mold in exterior walls during the winter months.

What can you do about it? There are two reasons why you may notice condensation issues on windows. The first is that you may have high humidity inside your home. If this is the case, it's recommended to address your humidity issue through dehumidification or by correcting interior moisture issues. The second is that you may have old, single-pane, windows that get colder than newer double-pane windows do. In this case, you can temporarily put plastic on the windows to attempt to create an "air gap" that acts as a layer of insulation against the cold weather, but ultimately the only permanent solution will be to replace your windows with newer windows that are more energy efficient.

We hope this information was helpful and gives you something to look for this winter. This will allow you to identify potential issues so that you can address them to prevent further damage to your home and increase its energy efficiency.

As always, if we can ever help with anything, please don't hesitate to let us know.



About Disaster Blaster
Disaster Blaster is an indoor environmental firm serving the Northeastern PA area.

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living green

Don't Settle in for that Long

Winter's Nap

By Jessica Yoder

With the holiday season approaching, how often do we hear “no gifts, please” or “the kids don’t need anything”? There’s a growing trend towards giving “experiences” rather than a tangible gift. What an incredible way to show our loved ones just how much they mean to us, during the holidays and all year round!



I challenge you to give yourself an experience as well. Make the winter solstice a time to breathe in deeply that crisp cold air and find a new trail to explore, a new summit to reach. Our region saw several new river access projects this year, so you have more opportunities to connect to the water, to nature. Let the Pocono forests and waters wash over you and recharge your mind and body as the sun sets on this year. Did you ever notice that snow has a smell?

Take part in community events in your neighborhood that support local businesses, gather friends together, and celebrate the things that make your community unique. Listen to the laughter of kids, the contented whispers of couples on a winter stroll. And while the





wildlife might be less active, the forests hum a delicate song if you actually pause and take notice.

Come watch bald eagles nesting along the Delaware and Lackawaxen Rivers. The populations of these once endangered birds have made a stunning comeback, and they truly are a marvel to see. There's magic in sharing that experience with your loved ones. Delaware Highlands Conservancy can help.

If your travels bring you to Pike County, be sure to check out the Pike Outdoors guide for lots of great info on trails, parks, and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Promised Land State Park welcomes snowshoers, ice fishing, hiking, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling on more than 23 miles of groomed, designated trails (on both state park and state forest lands).

The trees may be asleep for the winter, but it's still fun to wander through the woods.

*Photos (left to right):
Cliff Trail (credit: Jessica Yoder)
Rock Hill Pond in Delaware State Forest (credit: Jessica Yoder)
Lackawaxen River Access in Hawley (credit: James Hamill)
Lackawaxen & Delaware confluence (credit: Jessica Yoder)*



Jessica Yoder is the preservation planner at Pike County Planning & Mapping. Jessica serves on the Pocono Forests & Waters Steering Committee, as well as the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee. She is a seeker of the paths less traveled and loves discovering what's around the river bend. Jessica has a passion for connecting people to nature, and you can reach her at pikeoutdoors@pikepa.org. Visit www.pikepa.org/pikeoutdoors.



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SHADE

By The Reverend Mrs. Silence DoGood

Dear Editor,

One day last summer as I was driving past Charlie Winslow's farm, I pulled to the side of the road and stopped my car. It was midday. At the southern end of his lower pasture is a small stand of trees. With the sun overhead, there was ample shade under the trees for eight of his beef cows to rest. Only one was standing. I looked at the cows avoiding the hot sun and thought how smart they were. They were avoiding an uncomfortable situation. Right before my eyes was an idea for my following Sunday's sermon.

I named my sermon Shade. I described in detail the bucolic scene of the cows resting in the shade of summer foliage. The shade was a safe and cool space to be, and it was the cows' natural instinct to seek comfort. And then I spoke about all of us. That we, like the cows, should avoid people and places that make us uncomfortable. But often we don't.

I asked my congregation to think of times when they were uncomfortable. I had them think of whether there was a shady space that could have helped them during those times. Could they have moved to another location? Could they have changed the subject? Could they have taken the initiative and done something to make the situation better? I explained there is no guilt in wanting to make oneself comfortable.

I gave the sermon twice as we are still holding service at the Unity Grange hall, and we need two services to accommodate our congregation. When our new church is finished, we will probably only need one service.

I had forgotten about that sermon until Mr. John Dennis, the principal at our high school, made an appointment to see me. He said it was very urgent and that it dealt with one of his students. I invited him into the parlor at the parsonage. I had already prepared some green tea and had my homemade oatmeal cookies laid out waiting for him. I never expected what he told me.

He asked me if I knew Ms. Blousy Miller, the seventeen year old high school senior. I explained that I know her parents as they are members of my congregation. I said I have seen her several times at my Sunday service with her parents, but I have never met her. He also asked

me if I knew the meaning of "throwing shade". I said I didn't.

"Blousy's teachers have had complaints from other students' parents that she is horrible to their children. She publicly criticizes them, she makes sarcastic remarks about them, and she actually expresses contempt for them." He went on. "She rolls her eyes when her classmates are speaking. She laughs at nothing funny. And she inappropriately asks for evidence when her classmates are speaking about their experiences. These are examples of throwing shade."

I innocently asked what I can do to help. Mr. Dennis said that Blousy blames you for her conduct because you were advocating "shade" in one of your summer sermons. I recounted my actual sermon about the cows sitting in the shade. I told Mr. Dennis that my words could not have inspired Blousy.

I discussed this matter with my loving husband Willie. He suggested that I give another sermon about shade. At some point I should open an umbrella over my head to demonstrate what happens under an umbrella on sunny days. Shade. Not throwing shade.

I didn't follow his advice but did invite Mr. and Mrs. Miller and Blousy for tea in the parsonage. At one point during our friendly discussion, I opened an umbrella over my head to demonstrate shade. That was the only meaning of my sermon.

Several weeks later I checked with Mr. Dennis to learn about Blousy's conduct. He said that she stopped "throwing shade" but now always walks around school carrying an umbrella. Sometimes closed. Sometimes open even on sunny days.

Amen.



The Reverend Mrs. Silence DoGood

Senior Pastor
Executive Director
President
Chairman
Choir Master (part-time)

The First Church of God's Love

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Book Review

THE LEAVES ARE OFF THE TREES, REVEALING A TANTALIZING SECRET.

You couldn't see it before, but you can tell now that the branches still support old twigs and other random material. Last spring, these things made a nest that filled with eggs, then baby birds up high. And in the new book, "How to Know a Crow" by Candace Savage, illustrated by Rachel Hudson, you'll meet one of them.

In the spring, crows – scientifically known as *Corvus brachyrhynchos*, or American Crows – usually look for their own "paradise", a place with high trees, wide branches, and fields and lawns to forage for food. When they find such a place, they build a large nest with branches and soft ingredients on which to lay eggs.

To start this story, there are five eggs in the nest. The first one laid is the first one hatched, and Savage calls the spindly chick "Oki".

It takes a few days before Oki and the other chicks are able to even sit upright. Until then, their eyes are shut. They have very few feathers but very big mouths: baby crows are basically eating machines, and if another creature approaches the nest, the babies beg for food.

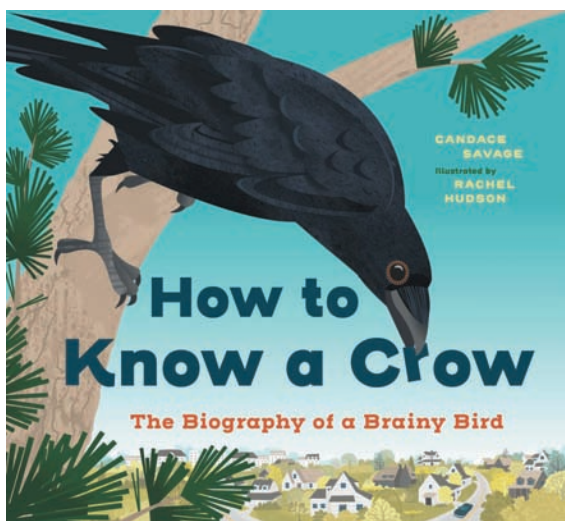
Fortunately, Oki's parents and older siblings are happy to oblige.

After about twenty days of life – and after an owl has snatched one of Oki's siblings – the crow chicks look more like birds. They're no longer scrawny; they have feathers and

they're able to help keep their nest clean. By this time, local scientists can spot them for identification and later research.

As the baby birds become big birds, things get crowded in the nest. Oki "is almost as large as an adult, but she is far from grown up", even at five weeks old. She plays, which is important for her socialization, and she sees how to forage for her own food. She will learn how to survive in cold weather and she may learn to trust humans.

"How to Know a Crow: The Biography of a Brainy Bird"



*By Candace Savage
Illustrated by Rachel Hudson
Reviewed by Terri Schlichenmeyer*

that this isn't just a story, but a story full of real-life – and that's not always a happy thing. Savage is honest, adding danger and death into this tale. Fear not: the disappearance of a chick is not belabored, and the real-life aspects of a bird's life are balanced by tidbits and much more to the tale.

Illustrations by Rachel Hudson may tend to kid-ize this book some, but doesn't lose its charm as a quick and informative read for a grown-up bird-watcher. For you, "How to Know a Crow" is a book you'll want to keep around your nest.

So you say that one of your favorite activities is bird-watching. Without even meaning to, you've joined a club with nearly 100 million of your fellow Americans, and "How to Know a Crow" is a book you'll want.

In her author's note, Candace Savage promises readers that while Oki is an imaginary creature, "Everything that happens in these pages happened to a crow in real life". Experts in Canada and America were consulted, which gives readers assurance

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FAFSA UPDATE:

WHY GRANDPARENTS NOW HAVE A GREATER INCENTIVE TO OWN 529 ACCOUNTS

..... Provided by Michael Krupa

Big changes to the FAFSA process mean grandparents can finally help pay for college without worrying about the “financial-aid trap.” Because of pending changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), students will no longer have to disclose cash support. That means effective for the 2024–2025 school year, grandparent-owned 529 accounts will no longer impact a student’s eligibility to receive needs-based financial aid.

How the FAFSA determines financial need

Financial need is determined by:		Parents	Students
School's cost of attendance – student aid index (SAI) = Financial need	Income	22% to 47% of available income ¹	50% of adjusted gross income over \$9,410 ²
	Assets	0% to 5.64% of assets ³ ■ Mutual funds ■ Securities ■ Bank accounts, CDs ■ 529 savings plans when parent or dependent student is account owner	20% of assets held in student's name ⁴ ■ UGMA/UTMA accounts not held in 529 plan ■ Minor trusts not held in 529 plan ■ Savings bonds (in student's name)

Say goodbye to the financial-aid trap

529 plans are generally considered the most effective way to save for education related expenses. But in the past, treatment of grandparent-owned accounts had been criticized and even garnered the term financial-aid trap from savingforcollege.com. Why? Because while families applying for aid aren't required to disclose grandparent-owned 529 account assets on the FAFSA, they are required to disclose any cash support the student receives. So, if distributions are taken from grandparent-owned accounts and used for education expenses,

the student is expected to show the distribution as income on future FAFSA applications.

As the table above shows, up to 50% of annual student income can be deemed eligible for college use, which can have a big impact on needs-based aid eligibility. Meanwhile, parent-owned 529 plans, which are disclosed upfront on the FAFSA, are only evaluated as up to 5.64% available for college use (no more than any other nonqualified asset).

The new FAFSA questionnaire, which will be in effect for the 2024–2025 academic year, no longer requires students to manually disclose cash support on the FAFSA

form. As a result of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, all student income will be taken from tax return data, using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT). So grandparents can finally contribute significantly to the cost of their grandchildren's education without impacting any needs-based financial aid eligibility.



What makes 529 plans attractive for grandparents

Even before this change was announced, 529 plans offered grandparents several advantages, including exclusive gifting and estate planning benefits. After all, many grandparents are either in their peak earning years or already retired. They're likely thinking about their financial legacy, putting them in a great position to enjoy all the benefits of 529 accounts.

Consider how 529 assets are treated in the Internal Revenue Code:

- Contributions to 529 plans are completed gifts and are removed from the contributor/owner's taxable estate, but the owner maintains control.
- Forward-gifting provision allows contributions in the amount of five times the annual exclusion — \$90,000 for individuals (\$180,000 for joint filers) — to be made in a single year without gift tax. This can be done for as many beneficiaries as the contributor desires.
- Access to tax-deferral with no time, age or income limits and with no required minimum distribution from 529 accounts for the owner or successor owner upon inheritance.

529 accounts also benefit grandparents because they're incredibly flexible. For example, if the beneficiary decides not to attend college, the account owner can easily change the beneficiary at any time. Equally important is the account owner's ability to transfer ownership. Grandparents can maintain control while the beneficiary is still years away from college, in case

they unexpectedly need the account assets for their own use, then can transfer ownership to the beneficiary's parent when it's time to take distributions for college expenses.

Bottom line

529 plans have always been a powerful college savings tool and a smart

vehicle for grandparents looking to take advantage of gift and estate tax benefits. But until now, even these highly regarded features, combined with tax-free qualified distributions, haven't always been powerful enough to overcome worries about potential impacts to financial aid. Thankfully, this is no longer a concern, and grandparents considering investing in a 529 plan to help send their grandchildren to college can now do so without fearing the financial-aid trap.

1 Available income is the amount of parental adjusted gross income after allowances for federal, state, local and FICA taxes, as well as an income protection allowance based on the number of people in the household.

2 \$9,410 is the income protection allowance for the 2024–2025 academic year.

3 Assets held in qualified retirement plans, such as IRAs, are not considered in determining eligibility for federal student aid. The percentage of other assets considered in determining SAI will vary based on the amount of assets, the age of the eldest parent and whether there are one or two parents.

4 A UTMA/UGMA 529 account of a dependent student is reported as a parental asset on the FAFSA.

Source for 1–4: U.S. Department of Education and Federal Student Aid, 2024–2025



Michael Krupa
614 Church Street
Honesdale, PA 18431
570-253-0121
michaelkrupa@krupawm.com

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POCONO secrets

December in the Poconos **HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS**

By LA Guzda

December is a beautiful time of year throughout the Pocono Mountains and the surrounding area. It's a great time to enjoy some very special events. Here are a few of our favorites.

Bethel Woods Center for the Arts

Peace, Love & Lights is back and better and brighter than last year! From Black Friday until New Year's Eve, experience the sparkling brilliance of the fantastic light show, winding through 1.7 miles of the beautiful Bethel Woods grounds from the comfort of your car.



Just turn off your headlights and follow the magical glow.

Standard Vehicle: \$32

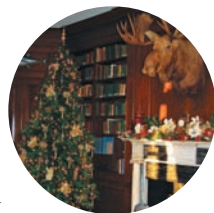
A Walk-thru experience is also available on Mondays – December 2, 9, 16 & 23 5 PM-9 PM, last entry at 7:30 PM.

Tickets are \$12 adult (12 & older) and free for those under 11 and under.

www.bethelwoodscenter.org

Grey Towers National Historic Site – December 6-8, 2024

Annual performance of Charles Dickens' immortal classic *A Christmas Carol*. This 90-minute two-person performance features the original text by Charles Dickens as he himself performed it during his reading tour of America. For 44 years, one or more members of the Plummer family have pre-



sented this performance in the Great Hall of Grey Towers. This year, siblings Therese and Joe Plummer, Jr. continue this proud holiday tradition.

This show is not recommended for children under the age of 10.

\$15 Students / \$25 Members / \$30 General Public

For times and tickets visit
www.greytowers.org/events

Stourbridge Line Excursions: Santa Christmas Tree Express – December 14th & 15th

Climb aboard for a unique Christmas experience with a ride on the Santa Christmas Tree Express. Travel in comfort of heated coaches as you dash down the tracks to the trackside Christmas venue. Once you arrive, climb off the train (steps required) to visit Santa and enjoy complimentary hot chocolate.

Passengers will have approximately one hour to visit Santa and choose and purchase that unique Christmas tree from Dein's pre-cut Christmas tree lot if you so desire. Trees will be baled, tagged, and loaded onto the flat car. Passengers and trees will be returned to the station. Crews will unload the trees and place them so you can take them to your vehicle.

Please note that the tree cost is additional. Christmas trees are priced individually and sold by Dein Nurseries. Prices will vary according to the size and variety of trees. Wreaths and potted trees will also be available. Cash and credit cards are accepted.

Adults \$30 / Children \$25 / Infants FREE

Holiday Dinner Train – December 22nd & 29th

Enjoy a scenic trip along the Lackawaxen River to celebrate the holiday season while savoring an amazing dinner catered by Sidel's Restaurant.

Three course dinner including: Salad, Entrée, Specialty Potato, Vegetable and Dessert

Choose from any of the following entrees:

- Spinach Ricotta Stuffed Veal au Jus
- Wild Salmon w/ Apple Cranberry Cinnamon glaze

- Roasted Pork Chop w/Cabernet Mushroom reduction
(Accommodations made for dietary restrictions when requested at time of reservation.)

The dining car has tables of 2 or 4; please note that tables of 2 are on the forest view side of the train. Seating is assigned in the order that reservations are received.

This is a BYOB event. Please let them know if you are bringing wine or beer.

Adults \$75 / Youth age 3-12 \$70

www.thestourbridgeline.net/excursions

Quiet Valley Living Historical Farm's Old Time Christmas– December 7th & 8th and December 14th & 15th

Tours start every 15 minutes 2:30 PM – 7 PM
(last tour at 7 PM)

Enjoy Christmas in the 1800s on candlelit guided tours of Quiet Valley. Lanterns and luminaries will abound, and the farm will be decked out in festive holiday finery. Stop by the bonfire to get warm and listen to a story or two. See the Christmas putz in the Victorian parlor and watch as the farm family makes special gifts for their loved ones. In the barnyard find the heart of Christmas as you visit the live nativity, complete with farm animals. In the cabin see how the family celebrated the holiday in the early 19th century. At the schoolhouse, the school marm will lead you in singing carols, and then off you go to the farmhouse for a visit with an old Pennsylvania German folk character, the Belschnikel! He really knows who has been naughty or nice! Stop by the Christmas Tree Forest where decorated trees sponsored by Quiet Valley families and local businesses will be waiting for guests to vote on their favorite. Complimentary refreshments and the holiday gift shop are a great way to finish your tour. (The total time of your visit will be about an hour and a half)

Advanced Sale: Adult: \$16 Youths age 3-12: \$8

Onsite Sale: Adult \$18 Youths age 3-12 \$10

www.quietvalley.org

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Visit www.LAGuzda.com or www.PoconoSecrets.com.



THE AREA'S *GOOD STUFF*

DEC '24

Ongoing Events

MONDAYS

Brewpub Bingo

5:30-7 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Free fun and the chance to win WBC prizes. This is a family-friendly event. Must be 21 to drink with ID. Free to play. Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

TUESDAYS

Gentle AM Stretch with Maryanne

8:30-9:30 a.m. Lake Region Fitness, Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Info: 570-390-4GYM (4496) or info@lakeregionfitness.net.

WEDNESDAYS

Yoga with Maryanne

8:30-9:30 a.m. Lake Region Fitness, Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Info: 570-390-4GYM (4496) or info@lakeregionfitness.net.

WEDNESDAYS (EXC. DEC. 25)

Stitch and Sip: Yarn Over the Falls Weekly Crafty Hangout

6-8 p.m. Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Meet in the lobby of the Hawley Silk Mill in a relaxed, no-stress meet-up perfect for knitters, crocheters and fiber lovers of all kinds. Whether you're a beginner or have been crafting for years, everyone's welcome. BYOB. Info: 570-226-1337 or info@cocooncoffeeshouse.com or hawleysilkmill.com.

WEDNESDAYS (EXC. DEC. 25)

Trivia Night with Adam Owens

6:30-9 p.m. Runaway Train Brewery, Honesdale. 95.3 DNH The Rail presents Adam Owens. Make a plan, gather a team, and come test your brain in a race for the top score. Info: info@runawaytrainbrewery.com.

WEDNESDAYS, THURSDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS

Holiday Art Sale

Wayne County Arts Alliance, Honesdale. Info: 570-729-5740 or WayneCountyArtsAlliance@gmail.com.

THURSDAYS

Live Music Featuring John Curtin

5-8 p.m. Glass Restaurant, Ledges Hotel, Hawley. Info: 570-226-1337 or info@ledgeshotel.com.

THURSDAYS

Trivia Night With B-Ray

6-8 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Through Dec. 26. Get ready to flex your brainpower and gather your sharpest friends for a showdown with B-Ray Trivia. Team up to six. Free to play. Stay tuned on social media for category releases every Thursday. Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

THURSDAYS

Jazz Nights at Here & Now Brewing Company

6:30-9 p.m. Here & Now Brewing Company, Honesdale. Musical guests appear weekly and each week takes you on a different journey of sound. Free. Info: 570-253-0700 or info@hereandnowbrewing.com.

THURSDAYS

Trivia Night at Jive Bar

7-9 p.m. Jive Bar & Lounge, Milford. Through Dec. 26. See how much you know. Free. Info: 570-296-2500.

THURSDAYS, FRIDAYS, SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS

Poconos Lights

5-9 p.m. Poconos Park, Bushkill. Witness the holidays come to life in a breathtaking display of creativity and imagination, designed to kindle the spirit of togetherness and wonder. Be captivated by the brilliance of countless lights illuminating the night, transforming Poconos Park into a mesmerizing symphony of color and merriment. Experience over one mile of holiday cheer in a drive-thru Christmas experience. Info: 855-722-7938 or poconospark.com.

FRIDAYS

Yoga with Diane

10-11 a.m. Lake Region Fitness, Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Info: 570-390-4GYM (4496) or info@lakeregionfitness.net.

FRIDAYS

The Winter Hawley Farmers' Market

1-4 p.m. The Hawley Hub, Hawley. Nov. thru Apr. Delicious fresh and local produce and more. Pre-orders available from online vendor list, & pick up at the market. Info: 570-226-4064 or info@visithawleypa.com.

FRIDAYS**Live Music Fridays**

5-8 p.m. Runaway Train Brewery, Honesdale.
Info: info@runawaytrainbrewery.com.

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS**Live Music at Jive Bar**

7-11 p.m. Jive Bar & Lounge, Milford. Through Dec. 28. Rotating lineup of live music. Show your favorite band some love by stopping by the bar or making a reservation. Free.
Info: 570-296-2500.

FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS**Pocono Mountain Maple Tours**

Lake Russell Maple at Bentlers Farm, Newfoundland. Learn about the maple sugaring process & take a tour of the 450-acre property.
Info: 570-242-0027 or
Courtney@PoconoMtnMaple.com.

SATURDAYS**Yoga with Diane**

10-11 a.m. Lake Region Fitness, Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Info: 570-390-4GYM (4496) or
info@lakeregionfitness.net.

SATURDAYS**Main Street Farmers' Market**

11 a.m.-1 p.m. The Cooperage, Honesdale. Through Apr. 26, 2025. Provides the greater Honesdale community with access to superb local products. The market features local farmers with fresh produce, meats, and eggs, & producers of local honey, baked goods, & a wide variety of unique regional items. Sample some products by purchasing a meal or snack at the Red Door Cafe, prepared by local caterer, The Mustard Seed Cafe. Seating available.
Info: 570-253-2020 or
thecooperageproject.org.

SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS**Wallenpaupack Brewing Company Brewery Tours**

Noon-6 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Step behind the scenes and discover where your favorite craft brews are made. Call to secure your spot or ask a beer-tender during your visit. Info: 570-390-7933 or
content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

SUNDAYS**Early Birdie Sim Special**

11 a.m.-1 p.m. The Wake Zone Indoor Golf & Taproom, Hawley. Swing in early to catch the Early Birdie Simulator discount. Enjoy half-off regular priced simulators.
Info: 570-390-8320 or
content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

December 1-31**DEC. 1, 7, 8, 21, 22****Santa Christmas Tree Express**

10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m. Honesdale Station, Honesdale. Dash down the tracks to the track-side Christmas tree farm. Visit with Santa, pick your favorite Christmas tree (trees are an additional cost), and enjoy complimentary hot chocolate. Once the train arrives back, the crew will unload the trees so you can take yours to your vehicle. You are responsible to attach it to your car, so be sure to bring the proper supplies to do so. Cash and credit cards accepted for trees. Info: 570-470-2697 or
info@thetourbridgeline.net or
thetourbridgeline.net.

DEC. 1, 8, 21, 22, 28-31**Pocono Winter Wonderland Express**

Multiple departures. Honesdale Station, Honesdale. Over the river and through the woods along the scenic Lackawaxen River. Learn about this beautiful winter wonderland on a 1.5-hour, round-trip excursion. Coaches are heated and have restrooms. Info: 570-470-2697 or
jhiller@thetourbridgeline.net or
thetourbridgeline.net.

DEC. 3, 10, 17**Name That Tune Night at the Brewery**

5:30-7 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Enjoy a night of music, fun, and friendly competition with your host Jeff. Free to play, and win WBC prizes. Bring your crew, show off your skills, and let the good vibes roll. Info: 570-390-7933 or
content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 6**Where Do the Animals Go When It Snows?**

3:30-5 p.m. Van Scott Nature Reserve of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Beach Lake. Join the Delaware Highlands Conservancy as they read "Over and Under the Snow" by Kate Messner and do fun activities and crafts to learn about wildlife in winter. Program is intended for elementary-age kids & families. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Advance registration requested. Info: 570-226-3164 or
rachel@delawarehighlands.org.

DEC. 6**Teen Open Mic + Karaoke**

7-9 p.m. Stoneworks Youth Center (behind The Cooperage), Honesdale. For grades 9-12. High school students are invited to drop in. Bring your instruments or top karaoke picks, slam poetry, original short acts, or any other performance pieces, or just come hang out, eat snacks, and cheer on the performers. Snacks, games, couches, mics. Free. No registration

needed. Info: 570-253-2020 or thecooperageproject.org.

DEC. 6

Open Mic Night

7-9 p.m. Cocoon Coffeehouse, Hawley.
Info: 570-226-1337 or info@cocooncoffeehouse.com or hawleysilkmill.com.

DEC. 6, 7, 8

Candlelight Christmas Dinner

5:30-9 p.m. The Settlers Inn, Hawley. An enchanting seasonal event. Enjoy holiday punch, syllabus, passed hors d'oeuvres, horse and carriage ride, farm-to-table feast, live music, and handcrafted holiday desserts. Reservations required. Info: 570-226-2993 or desk@thesettlersinn.com.

DEC. 6, 7, 8

Dramatic Production: Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, Milford. "A Christmas Carol" dramatic reading will be performed by Joe Plummer Jr. The performance is 85 minutes and not recommended for children under the age of 10. Call for times. Info: 570-296-9625 or info@greytowers.org.

DEC. 6

Merry & Bright Family Night on the Stourbridge Line

6-9 p.m. Honesdale Station, Honesdale. Welcome bag includes a destination passport that when completed enters you to win a prize. Arriving at the Christmas village, families will be met by Santa himself. Two food trucks, local vendors, carolers, activities for the kids, & more. Benefits Ronald McDonald House of Scranton. Registration required: rmhscranton.org/merry-bright-family-night/.

DEC. 7

Wacky Science Adventures

10 a.m.-Noon. Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Put on your lab coats and prepare to conduct some crazy experiments. You'll get to create your very own slime, oobleck, and attempt to launch a rocket into space. Call to register. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 7

Healing Mandalas

10:30 a.m.-Noon. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Carol Mainardi. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or Info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 7

Apple Valley Village's Christmas Celebration

Noon-4 p.m. Kids can write their letters to Santa, enjoy exciting sleigh rides, and get cre-

ative with holiday-themed crafts. There will be plenty of games, seasonal treats, and even a gift-wrapping station to make the day extra special. Local vendors offer unique holiday gifts, making it the perfect spot to pick up something special while enjoying the joyful atmosphere. Free. Info: marketing@milfordhospitalitygroup.com.

DEC. 7

Alcohol Ink

1-2:30 p.m. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Carol Mainardi. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 7

Milford's Annual Tree Lighting

1-7 p.m. Milford Community House, Milford. Activities throughout the town all day long. Enjoy cookie swaps, photo booths, Mr. and Mrs. Claus, extended shopping hours, luminaries, the tree lighting (just before 4:30 p.m.) with Santa & much more. Free. Info: 570-296-8700 or info@pikechamber.com.

DEC. 8

Nature Photography

10 a.m.-Noon. Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Learn some beginner techniques on how to frame a picture and then apply those skills on PEEC's trails. Great for children and those starting from scratch. Participants will need a camera for pictures, even a phone camera will do. Call to register. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 8

Pictures with Santa at The Wake Zone Indoor Golf & Taproom

10 a.m.-3 p.m. The Wake Zone Indoor Golf & Taproom, Tafton. Enjoy a fun day filled with free Santa photos, gift for every child, hot cocoa and cookies, coloring contest and much more. Free. Info: 570-390-8320 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 8

Holiday Artisans' Market

11 a.m.-3 p.m. The Cooperage, Honesdale. Jury-selected market features the finest offerings from regional artists and craftspeople. Info: Laurel Burns, 570-253-2020 or laurel@thecooperageproject.org or thecooperageproject.org.

DEC. 8

Young Artisans' Market - Holiday Edition!

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Stoneworks Youth Center (behind The Cooperage), Honesdale. Creators ages 17 and under will be selling their wares. Come and discover the talent, creativity, and skills of the region's top young entrepreneurs.

Info: Amanda Masters, 570-253-2020 ext. 2 or amanda@thecooperageproject.org or thecooperageproject.org.

DEC. 8

Bridge the Gap: Ecozone Discovery Room!

1-4 p.m. Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Climb into a bald eagle's nest, crawl into a bat cave, explore a beaver lodge, and dig in a fossil pit. Explore this indoor discovery room and enjoy hands-on exhibits on natural history, sustainability and the local environment. Free. No registration required. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 10

Paint and Sip at Wallenpaupack Brewing Company

6-8 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Get out for a night of crafting and sipping. Hosted by Melissa from The Craft Room. Sign-up online. Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 12

Ugly Sweater Happy Hour

5:30-7:30 p.m. Runaway Train Brewery, Honesdale. Jim Hamill and his surprise celebrity crew of bartenders are ready to pour out the fun. Benefits the Settlers Cares Foundation, which aids hospitality workers in the Poconos. Food and drinks a la carte. Info: info@runawaytrainbrewery.com.

DEC. 12, 19

Christmas Tea

2-4 p.m. The Settlers Inn, Hawley. Delight in the Inn's holiday décor during a festive afternoon tea. Enjoy delicious fresh brewed teas, finger sandwiches and desserts. Info: 570-226-2993 or desk@thesettlersinn.com.

DEC. 13

PCDC Craft Store Holiday Open House

Noon-2 p.m. The Pike County Developmental Center, Milford. Hand-crafted gifts for all occasions. Complimentary coffee, tea & desserts. Benefits participants of PCDC. Info: 570-296-6319.

DEC. 13

Boundin' Furbearers

1-2 p.m. Van Scott Nature Reserve of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Beach Lake. Ever wonder about the difference between a red fox and a grey fox? Did you know that grey fox are the only member of the canine family that can climb trees? Do opossums really play dead? What is a fisher? Join the Delaware Highlands Conservancy to learn about many of the various furry animals that live in the woods around us. Prior registration requested. Program is intended for families;

children must be accompanied by an adult to attend. Info: 570-226-3164 or rachel@delawarehighlands.org.

DEC. 13

Chocolate and Coffee Tasting with Moka Origins

1-3 p.m. Cocoon Coffeehouse & Bakery or Hawley. A chocolate and coffee tasting as part of Hawley Winterfest weekend. Info: 570-226-1337 or info@cocooncoffeehouse.com.

DEC. 13

Paint & Sip: Birch (winter)

6:30-8:30 p.m. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Looking for a fun and relaxing evening out with friends? Get creative and make some new memories with artist Rosellyn Grohol. Bring your friends and your own bottle and then unwind. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 13-15

Hawley Winterfest

Downtown Hawley. The town is aglow with fun festivities and twinkling lights. Stroll through town and visit with the store owners, shop the holiday bargains, have the kids make a craft and get your gift list completed by supporting unique small businesses. Enjoy live theater at The Ritz Playhouse, live music at many local churches, a live nativity play, horse and carriage rides, many craft vendors, ugly sweater contest, Trees for a Cause, holiday decorating contest, holiday lights, Beer Tour, Christmas Tree Express train rides, and so much more. Free. Info: 570-226-4064 or info@visithawleypa.com.

DEC. 14

Romping Radishes + Microgreens: Winter Wonderland

10-11 a.m. Stoneworks Youth Center (behind The Cooperage), Honesdale. Did you know there are many different shapes of snowflakes? See if you can find them all. And a story, craft & snack. Romping Radishes and MicroGreens will be combined this month. Info: 570-253-2020 or thecooperageproject.org.

DEC. 14

Bird Bonanza

10 a.m.-Noon. Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Spend time watching the feeders and putting together your own unique and custom bird feeder from a variety of recycled materials just in time for winter. PEEC provides everything you need, but you are welcome to bring your own supplies. Call to register. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 14**Breakfast with Santa**

10 a.m.-Noon. The Waterfront, Silver Birches Resort, Hawley. Bring the family for a fun morning with gingerbread cookie decorating. Reservations: 570-226-4388.

Info: 570-226-4388 or

info@silverbirchesresortpa.com.

DEC. 14**Doodles**

10:30 a.m.-Noon. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Rosellyn Grohol. Doodle art is a form of creative expression that has gained popularity in recent years. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 14**Acrylic Painting**

1-2:30 p.m. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Rosellyn Grohol. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 14**Ecozone Discovery Room!**

1-4 p.m. Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Climb into a bald eagle's nest, crawl into a bat cave, explore a beaver lodge, and dig in a fossil pit. Explore this indoor discovery room and enjoy hands-on exhibits on natural history, sustainability and the local environment. No registration required. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 14**Rockin' Christmas**

6-9 p.m. Glass-wine.bar.kitchen, Hawley. Featuring live music with John Curtin. No cover charge. Info: 570-226-1337 or info@ledgeshotel.com.

DEC. 14, 15**Winterfest Artisan Fair**

10 a.m.-5 p.m. Art on the Edge, Hawley Silk Mill, Hawley. Shop an indoor/outdoor marketplace of juried artisan and fine craft goods as part of Hawley Winterfest. Free. Info: 570-226-1337.

DEC. 14, 15**Winterfest Brunch**

11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. The Settlers Inn, Hawley. Farm to table brunch and enjoy the Inn decked out in its holiday finery, plus live music by harpist Kristy Chmura. Reservations: 570-226-2993. Info: 570-226-2993 or desk@thesettlersinn.com.

DEC. 14, 15**Hawley Santa Christmas Tree Express**

Multiple departures. Hawley Station, Hawley. Dash down the tracks to the track-side Christmas tree farm. Visit with Santa, pick your favorite Christmas tree (trees are an additional cost), and enjoy complimentary hot chocolate. Once the train arrives back, the crew will unload the trees so you can take yours to your vehicle. You are responsible to attach it to your car, so be sure to bring the proper supplies to do so. Cash and credit cards accepted for trees. Info: 570-470-2697 or info@thetourbridgeline.net or thestourbridgeline.net.

DEC. 15**Abstract Alcohol Ink**

10:30 a.m.-Noon. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Rosellyn Grohol. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or Info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 15**Winter Ecology Hike**

Pocono Environmental Education Center, Dingmans Ferry. Learn how different plants and animals survive the winter. Join PEEC on a hike and experience PEEC in the wintertime. All ages welcome. Call to register. Info: 570-828-2319 or peec@peec.org.

DEC. 15**Brunch with Santa**

11 a.m.-2 p.m. Hotel Anthracite, Carbondale. A festive brunch with Santa in Gravity Hall. Take photos with the jolly old elf himself. Reservations: 570-536-6020. Info: info@hotelanthracite.com.

DEC. 15**Alcohol Ink Markers**

1-2:30 p.m. Art Factory of White Mills, White Mills. Workshop with artist Rosellyn Grohol. All materials included. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-251-1181 or info@theartfactoryofwhitemills.com.

DEC. 18**Boxwood Christmas Trees Sip and Snip**

5:30-7 p.m. Gorgeous Floral, Hawley. Create your own miniature boxwood Christmas tree to enhance the holiday décor at your home or office. Includes a cocktail or mocktail. Enjoy hot cocoa and a "snow berry" mimosa. Participants will receive 15% off any in-store purchase. Call to reserve: 570-576-0490. Info: 570-576-0490 or info@gorgeous-floral.com.

DEC. 20**Teen Art Lounge**

6-8 p.m. Stoneworks Youth Center (behind The Cooperage), Honesdale. Grades 6-12. Jess Kjera & Danny White lead a workshop to try your hand at a new medium, with lots of open

time to hang out and make art. Collaborate with local artists while hanging out with friends. Pre-registration required. Info: 570-253-2020 or thecooperageproject.org.

DEC. 21

Winter Solstice Celebration

5 p.m. (weather permitting). D & H Canal Park at Lock 31, Hawley. Embrace the magic of the longest night of the year. For centuries, people have gathered on this special night to mark the transition into winter. Candle lighting ceremony, bonfire, hot cider & refreshments. Free. Reservations required. RSVP at waynehistorypa.com or 570-253-3240.

DEC. 22

Sunday Brunch with Santa at The Brewery

Noon-2 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Enjoy brunch alongside their signature craft brews and, of course, a visit from Santa himself. Kids can share their holiday wishes with Santa, snap photos, and harvest the memories while mom and dad relax with a delicious meal and delicious brews. Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 22

Holiday Dinner Train

4 p.m. Honesdale Station, Honesdale. Trip along the Lackawaxen River to celebrate the holiday season while enjoying an amazing dinner catered by Sidel's Restaurant. Dining car has tables of two or four, please note that tables of two are on the forest view side of the train. Seating assigned in the order that reservations are received. BYOB. Let Stourbridge Line know if you are bringing wine or beer. Info: 570-470-2697 or jhillier@thestourbridgeline.net or thestourbridgeline.net.

DEC. 26

Pottery Class at Wallenpaupack Brewing Company

6-8 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Enjoy breathing and stretching exercises, wheel and handle demonstrations, and then get your hands on the wheel to make your pot or bowl. Clients will choose glaze colors and be notified by Fury Art in approximately two weeks when their artwork is finished and returned. Call for details: 610-823-3742. Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 28

Runaway Train Beer Tasting Experience and Lunch

3 p.m. Honesdale Station, Honesdale. Scenic trip along the Lackawaxen River while being treated to two pints of the Runaway Train Brewery's finest craft beers. Return for a behind the scenes tour of the brewery opera-

tions, a Runaway Train souvenir, and a fabulous lunch. Info: 570-470-2697 or jhillier@thestourbridgeline.net.

DEC. 28

Magic Night at The Brewery with Matty Whipple

5-8 p.m. Wallenpaupack Brewing Company, Hawley. Experience wonder & surprises with on-site magician, Matty Whipple, performing jaw-dropping illusions. Perfect for all ages. Family-friendly event is free to attend (21 and to enjoy the brews, ID Required). Info: 570-390-7933 or content@wallenpaupackbrewingco.com.

DEC. 31

New Year's Eve Dinner

5-10 p.m. The Settlers Inn, Hawley. Enjoy live music by Dan Bradley and a special menu in the dining room. Info: 570-226-2993 or desk@thesettlersinn.com.

DEC. 31

New Year's Eve Dinner Around the World

5 p.m.-1 a.m. Glass - Wine.Bar.Kitchen, Hawley. Celebrate the New Year by the waterfall and take your tastebuds on a culinary journey around the globe. The elegant menu showcases celebratory foods from all the world's continents. Info: 570-226-1337 or info@ledgeshotel.com.

DEC. 31

New Years Eve Great Gatsby Gala

8 p.m.-Midnight. Historic Forest Hall, Milford. Step into the elegance and glamour of the Roaring 20s this New Year's Eve at the historic Forest Hall in Milford, PA. A lively seven-piece big band will set the tone, filling the night with timeless 1920s classics that will keep you dancing well into the new year. Dress to impress, grab your friends, and enjoy an enchanting New Year's Eve like no other. Info: 570-300-4940 or marketing@milfordhospitalitygroup.com.

DEC. 31

New Year's Eve Ball

8:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m. Hotel Anthracite, Carbondale. Ring in 2025 with a ball in Gravity Hall. Featuring live music by the JeffreyJames Band, food stations throughout the night and more. Reservations: 570-536-6020. Info: info@hotelanthracite.com.

DEC. 31

New Year's Eve Bash

8:30 p.m.-1 a.m. The Waterfront, Silver Birch- es Resort, Hawley. Usher in 2025 complete with DJ, decadent buffet, dancing, champagne and a noisemaker. Reservations required. Info: 570-226-4388 or info@silverbirchesresortpa.com.

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