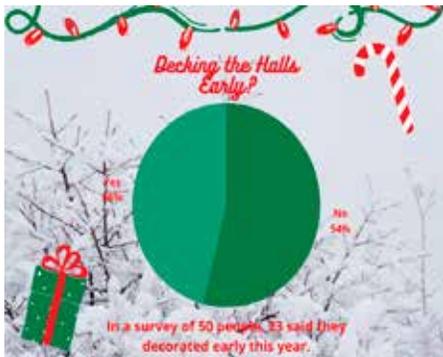


Jumpstart joy

By: Mila Van Weelden
@milavanweelden



In a convenience poll of 50 people, 23 people said they decorated for Christmas early.

The saying, “Christmas came early this year,” has never been more true. With both a global pandemic and a derecho taking place in the same year, people longed for a way to lift up their spirits. Christmas was the perfect opportunity to bring some happiness within our area.

A substantial amount of families think it is inappropriate to decorate for Christmas before Thanksgiving has taken place. People’s mindsets changed when they needed a way to escape from reality and fill their souls with joy. Lydia Moore, freshman, and her family decorated for Christmas on November 9th. She said, “This is our first year putting lights up, because we moved and now have outdoor outlets.” “Seeing Christmas lights make me happy! And seeing the ones on my house for the first time made me very excited!” Moore had a family member against setting up lights before Thanksgiving, but a solution was reached when the family decided that they would only turn on the lights once all the rest of the decorations were set up. For Moore, Christmas and lights is about coming together as a family. “Christmas is important to our family because it brings together our small family! I’m not quite sure if decorating is that important, but it sure makes everything better!” Moore said.

Rylie Schutz, freshman, also decorated before Thanksgiving. She decorated Friday, November 20th. The same as Moore, the Schutz family also decorates for Christmas after Thanksgiving almost every year. They decided this year, nothing could hurt if Christmas came early. “We usually decorate after Thanksgiving but COVID has made this year quite a challenge, so we decided to decorate early.” “All of the news was a big part of why we put up the lights. You hear about all of the hard and sad stuff that’s going on in the world and forget you still have a great environment around you. This year has been so stressful with on-and-off school, the controversial question of if masks should be mandatory or not, and politics. With all of the events 2020 has brought to the table, we have decided that we should move the holidays up a bit sooner. Nothing can hurt at this point. I hope we are able to have a normal Christmas next year,” Schutz said.

Holiday cheer is a powerful thing. For a lot of people, thinking about Christmas time is an instant mood boost. So it is no surprise that in a year that we have been faced with challenge upon challenge, bad day upon bad day, and one struggle after another, people wanted that mood boost sooner rather than later. Schutz said, “I think the month of Christmas is the best time. Mariah Carey over the intercoms, red Salvation Army buckets at the front of stores where people ring bells, and the Hershey Kiss bell commercial that plays every ten minutes.” “Decorating is what we use to acknowledge the holiday is here.”

Through a pandemic, a derecho, a tough election, and whatever else 2020 offered families this year, the community stayed strong. The Christmas lights showing up in all neighborhoods are a sign that there are still things to be joyful about in a year that is continually showing the opposite.

Spreading cheer

By: Emalee Feuchtwanger
@emaleeaurquidez

During the holidays, the city of Marion is bursting with joy. From Christmas in the park, to the endless supply of colorful lights displayed throughout the town. Unfortunately, the combination of a global pandemic and a storm with winds over 130 mph, everything is looking a little different this year. Not only is the architecture different, but also the overwhelming amount of families that are spending the holidays in a rough patch this year. Many area families have suffered from unemployment, businesses shutting down, the loss of a loved one, or even the inability to celebrate the holiday season in their own home.

But finding joy in the situation, Michelle Wilson, MISD’s social worker, is helping other people find a light in a dark situation.

Wilson has been running our Holiday Giving Project for 26 years now, and this year will be no different. “I think we’ve done the very best we could do given the circumstances of COVID and the derecho. I’m very proud of our community for helping each other and giving back during this hard time,” Wilson said. This year, 150 families are being sponsored by the Holiday Giving Project (compared to the 170

families who were sponsored last year). This year so many people have gone through hardship, but despite that, have also donated money to help other people. Thanks to the Holiday Giving project people in the Marion community have the opportunity to donate money, gift cards, and non-perishable food items to families in need. In the past, each mentor class sponsored a family to provide gifts to, but due to the chaos of 2020, students’ schedules are too complicated for this to happen. However, as a group Marion’s choir has decided to sponsor a family. “I like the feeling of knowing that I made someone happy by helping them,” said Ella Fortmann, junior. Fortmann has donated supplies to the project for three years now, as well as to many other non-profit organizations.

All of the people who donated to the giving project this year have definitely proven that even in a world crisis, kindness is still present. I’d like to remind everyone that if everyone does a small part, we can easily make a big impact in our community, and help each other out when our community needs it most.

With all of the uncertainty this year has brought us, the only thing we can do is pick up the pieces left over from the damage and keep moving forward together.



In a season that is already tough for so many families, finances have been stretched tighter due to COVID and the derecho. It’s more important than ever to spread cheer where and when you can.