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Page Dowdy/Chesterfield Observer

The greenhouse management/floral design class at the Chesterfield Technical Center recently sold fresh wreaths, centerpieces, mailbox covers and other decorations for the holidays. Nancy Metz (right), a teacher at the Chesterfield Technical Center, helps Angela Payne pick out a wreath.

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Thomas. "We open everything on Christmas morning - one gift at a time. Then Poppa makes pancakes."

Renny Humphrey, county supervisor for the Matoaca District, leaves the office behind and she, her husband Gary and four-year-old Annie turn to traditions handed down from parents and grandparents.

"We have a winter solstice tradition. Every year, we string popcorn and cranberries and put it all in a special bucket. Then we go out and decorate a tree for the deer and squirrels," says Humphrey. "[On] Christmas Eve, we read [Annie] Twas the Night before Christmas."



Humphrey

"My grandparents bought property on Beach Road at the turn of the century and built the Victorian house I grew up in," continues Humphrey. "It is decorated [for Christmas] the same as it was 60 years ago - a wreath on every window and a light in every window - even during WWII when I had four uncles serving in the military at the same time. Now my brother decorates his tractor with lights."

Melissa Ray, her husband Roy and sons Thornton and Andrew have settled in Chester after Roy's retirement from the Army last year.

"There were so many years when we were in Germany and Italy and couldn't get home for the holidays, we are taking advantage of it now," says Ray. "We leave the day school is out and drive to Arkansas - 18 hours - to see family. I make up a bag of goodies for each person and put it in their stockings which we open right before we go. The boys get gum, books, DVDs, hand-held games and cards. We take the laptop to play the movies. I even make up one for myself with lotion and crossword puzzles. The gifts are all hidden until Christmas morning."

"It's not a bad trip," says Ray, "unless we hit a slam slick - [that's an] ice storm for non-Arkansas natives."

Ann Reid, public information coordinator for the Chesterfield Police Department, and her husband David celebrate the holidays through a rich blend of heritage, tradition and religion. Ann's parents are from Scotland but emigrated to the United States when Ann was two years old. Adventurous people, they lived in several places in the United States, adding to their own Scottish traditions.

"Christmas pudding, cake with royal icing and Christmas crackers" are all important parts of Christmas," says Reid. "This year, we are going to Scotland for the holidays. My father is a Highlander and in the Celtic tradition we have First Footing - we meet and greet people at midnight [on] Christmas eve. Those with light hair were considered strangers and carried coal. Others brought symbolic gifts of whiskey or shortbread. The Scots are lyrical so music is a big part of the holidays."

"New Year's Eve is a really big deal," continues Reid. "It is called Hogmanay and lasts into New Year's Day. The family cleans the whole house - out with the old, in with the new. We have steak pie on New Year's Eve and gifts the next day."

"David is Jewish, and so they celebrate Hanukah with David's sister and her family. They eat latkes and open the traditional eight gifts - one for each day of Hanukah. David loves the tree, though."

Recently married, Chesterfield **Sheriff Clarence Williams** and his wife Carol are blending families and creating new traditions.



Williams

"It's all about giving. We are having a Christmas brunch and will exchange gifts," shares Williams. "After Christmas, [Carol] will take her kids skiing, and I will go down to Carolina to see my grandson in a wrestling meet and visit with my daughter."

"Last year, there was a Santa at Pet World and a little girl tugged on Santa to lean down so she could say, 'I love you, Santa.' And that [feeling] is what Christmas is all about."

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