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Winter Wonderland

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University of Dayton students will welcome hundreds of Dayton-area school children to a winter wonderland of cartoon characters, games, dancing, singing, crafts, face-painting and Santa Claus during the University's 48th Christmas on Campus Thursday, Thursday, Dec. 8. This year's theme is "Light the Way."

Started in 1964 as a way for students to celebrate Christmas before heading home for the winter break, the event has evolved into what is believed to be one of the nation's largest single-day, on-campus community service events. Nearly three-quarters of the undergraduate student body is involved in the event.

All Christmas on Campus events are free and open to the public.

The school children will arrive in C Lot, off Evanston Avenue by RecPlex, between 5 and 5:30 p.m.

The opening ceremony, live Nativity, tree lighting and Santa's arrival are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. in Humanities Plaza.

Activities in Santa's Workshop, RecPlex and Kennedy Union start after the tree lighting and end around 8 p.m.

In the Jesse Philips Humanities Center and Science Center classrooms, Santa's Workshop activities include instant messaging Santa; cookie and gingerbread house decorating; making ornaments; musical chairs; and making magnets, Christmas cards, Popsicle-stick picture frames and paper snowmen, and frosting cookies. Santa will take pictures with children in the Science Center, rather than the Humanities Center.

The carnival in RecPlex features children's games.

Kennedy Union is the place for entertainment. Performers include Miami Valley Dance Company, Celtic Academy of Irish Dance, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company 2, the University of Dayton dance team, Dakota Center drill team, the University of Dayton pep band and On the Fly, an improv comedy group.

A magician, Rudy Flyer, Dora the Explorer, Sully, Buzz Lightyear and Nemo will be walking around on campus.

The Flyers men's basketball team also will be signing autographs in Barrett Dining Room in Kennedy Union.

Dayton school children will return to their buses by 8:15 p.m.

Masses in the Immaculate Conception Chapel will celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at 9 a.m., 12:05 p.m., 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 8.

"Our campus commitment to looking to Mary as our model is exemplified during Christmas on Campus and celebrated joyfully on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception," said Crystal Sullivan, director of campus ministry.

The music department will hold its Christmas concert at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 7, at the South Park United Methodist Church, 140 Stonemill Rd.

Ellie Kurtz, director of the University of Dayton's student union from 1964 to 1994, started Christmas on Campus. She died in 2009.

"One night I was preoccupied with a sense of disappointment that students would be leaving for Christmas vacation and would not be able to celebrate Christmas with their friends and the UD family," Kurtz said. "I imagined what a wonderful Christmas we could have if we could celebrate Christmas *before* the students went home for the holidays."

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson at 937-229-3391.