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All Is Bright

11.23.2009 | Service and Giving, Campus and Community

This year's University of Dayton Christmas on Campus theme — "All Is Bright" — is an appropriate way to describe the memory of Ellie Kurtz, the annual event's founder whom the University will honor during this year's event Tuesday, Dec. 8.

"We will recognize Ellie in our opening ceremony, and we will recognize her in a special way in our program. We also have extended an invitation to her family to join us as we honor Ellie's memory," said student Jim Cosgrove, Christmas on Campus co-coordinator. "The Christmas on Campus committee also is looking for a more special and permanent way to leave Ellie's name on Christmas on Campus."

Kurtz, who died earlier this year, served as director of the University of Dayton's student union from 1964 to 1994. She started Christmas on Campus for a group of students who simply wanted to get together before heading home for the winter break.

"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 before her death. "I imagined what a wonderful Christmas we could have if we could celebrate Christmas before the students went home for the holidays."

The event evolved into what is believed to be one of the nation's largest single-day, on-campus community service events.

While the event will return to its traditional date, which honors the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, for the first time in three years, there is a change from the previous 45 years. Instead of Mass in the Frericks Center as the finale to Christmas on Campus festivities, there will be four Masses throughout the day in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at 9 a.m., 12:05 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.

"Four Masses gives the community more options. For instance, parents with young children who wish to attend Christmas on Campus could attend the 4:30 p.m. Mass as a family before enjoying the festival together," said Emily Strand, University of Dayton campus minister for liturgy. "The beauty and intimacy of the Chapel's worship space will enhance each of the four celebrations. The choice to have these Masses in the Chapel also is more environmentally and economically sustainable. The challenge of 'green living' calls our University community to search for more sustainable ways to accomplish our goals. These changes are just one way we are answering the call to financial and environmental responsibility."

"One aspect of the celebration will not change: the beauty and festivity with which the University celebrates this great feast."

The joy on the faces of nearly 800 Dayton-area school children won't change either, as University of Dayton students escort them through a winter wonderland of cartoon characters, games, dancing, singing, crafts, face-painting and Santa Claus.

The school children will arrive in C Lot, off Evanston Street by RecPlex, at 5:45 p.m.

The opening ceremony, live Nativity, tree lighting and Santa's arrival are at 6 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, Santa's Workshop activities include making magnets, Christmas cards, Popsicle picture frames and paper snowmen, and frosting cookies. 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, South Dayton Dance Theater and Jeraldyne's School of Dance Youth Ensemble.

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

Christmas on Campus ends with a candlelight walk at 8:30 p.m. from Humanities Plaza to the Immaculate Conception Chapel for the 9 p.m. Mass.

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