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# Festival of the Nativity

THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

**C**hristmas is often referred to as the season of giving and a Johnstown church is doing just that. Once again, First Presbyterian Church members are giving the community a gift. Their Festival of the Nativity has been presented for 30 years, according to church volunteer Janet Braudy. The event was created by the late Lois Siehl, who felt the community needed to have a reminder about the true meaning of Christmas. “The church felt it was important (to keep it running),” Braudy says. >>>





## do good

**THE FEATIVAL FEATURES A** number of musical groups that perform holiday favorites — old and new. “We have local choirs and school choruses that participate,” Braudy says.

But it’s not only the music that draws the crowds year after year.

The event is called the Festival of the Nativity for a reason. Each year, the church is loaned nearly 200 nativity sets that are displayed throughout several large rooms at the front of the church. Visitors are treated to displays made from crystal, fabric, wood, stone — some handcrafted. They come from several different countries and come in all sizes.

Many are owned by members of the First Presbyterian Church but others are loaned by friends, family members, as well as from those in the community.

“[There are] sets that we all have and we always invite folks with something unusual, old, or from another country (to participate). It’s very interesting,” Braudy says.

The festival is a three-day event. It starts on Friday and ends with a mass choir presentation on Sunday evening. The mass choir is led by long-time First Presbyterian Church choir director, Bill Williams. The final song for each festival is a rousing rendition of Hallelujah Chorus, which, following tradition, always brings those in attendance to their feet.

Braudy says the festival is a good way to showcase new talent. “The local music teachers have their students come and they get a chance to perform and showcase what they learned,” she says.

“People look forward to it every year. The Festival of the Nativity is very well attended and it’s gotten quite a following over the years. It’s just a very special way to celebrate Christmas.”

The festival runs December 6 — 8 this year.

The church, located at the corner of Lincoln and Walnut streets, will open 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. all three days. It also will open from 1 until 3:30 p.m. Sunday afternoon. It is free to the public and visitors are invited to look at the displays and stay for the music. >>*Crystal Hollibaugh*



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*In its seventh year, The Santa Fund continues to provide gifts for area children at Christmas time.*

### To help

For more information or to donate, go to [www.tribdem.com](http://www.tribdem.com)

## North Pole presents

### Gifts for kids in need

**T**he Santa Fund, an annual project to provide Christmas gifts for needy children in the area, is now in its seventh year.

The fund was created by *The Tribune-Democrat* as a way to help families who are facing hardships during the holiday season. It is administered by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

Last year, the fund generated over \$35,000 and assisted more than 1,000 children.

“The Santa Fund has quickly become a big part of the Christmas season in the Greater Johnstown area and we’re thrilled to play a role in making the holiday a bit brighter for needy children,” says Eric Knopsnyder, editor of *The Tribune-Democrat*.

Money comes from direct donations (which have ranged between \$1 to \$1,000) as well as from the Santa Fund Soccer Classic — a game featuring all-star athletes from area high schools. The game was held Nov. 23 at the Cambria County War Memorial Arena.

According to Mike Kane, executive director of the Community Foundation, all money raised goes directly to the purchase of gifts for the children of the area.

Once again this year, Bosco’s department store in The Galleria provides the toys for The Santa Fund. Bosco’s employees match gifts with children according to their age and gender.

Other partners include Alternative Community Action Program, which compiles the list of children to receive gifts; Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania, which bags and distributes the gifts; and AmeriCorps and the United Way, which provide volunteers.

The gifts are distributed in mid-December.

Knopsnyder says the community has responded to the need. “Each year, we urge local residents to help us with this mission and the response has been fantastic. The outpouring of support from the community each year is tremendous and is a testament to the generosity and caring nature of the people of our region.” >>*A.J.*