

THE DART

Local malls compete for Santa's time

Kathryn Fitzsimmons and Megan Kelly
Staff Writers

You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm telling you why; Santa Claus is coming to town... and you can visit him at a number of local malls. But believe it or not, Mr. Kringle hasn't always hopped on the sleigh to make stops at malls across the country.

Up until the mid 1840s, Santa Claus spent all of his time up in the North Pole preparing for Christmas Eve.

He supervised toy production, corresponded with stores around the world to keep up with new toy innovations and followed a hearty diet to maintain his plumpish figure.

One day, Santa realized he had become so wrapped up in the Christmas rush that he hadn't taken time to visit the children of the world. He decided he wouldn't let this atrocity go on for another day; he was going to figure out a way to visit with the children.

Santa called up his mall manager friends and asked if he could use their stores as a place where children could go and visit him. Of course they agreed, because who would deny Santa Claus such a simple request? And, as they say, the rest is history.

Never a staff to let a good lead go, upon hearing this tale your *Dart* reporters decided to investigate the Santa status at three local malls.

The first stop on our Santa

Search was Oak Park Mall, located at 95th and Quivera. After a bit of searching, we found Santa's wonderland shoved into a corner outside the first floor entrance of the Jones Store. The small corner was filled with trees, snow and friendly arctic animals. Penguins could be seen roasting marshmallows over a faux fire and fuzzy polar bears frolicked in the snow.

Santa sat beneath a winter landscape, posing for snapshots and inquiring about the children's Christmas wishes.

After a ten-minute wait, your *Dart* investigators got their

One day, Santa realized that he hadn't taken time to visit the children of the world.

chance to sit upon the fat man's lap. His slender appearance led us to believe that Mr. Claus had not

fulfilled his daily quota of cookies and milk. He also smelled of smoke and not the sleigh exhaust kind. His beard, along with his stature, was looking a bit on the short side.

He asked what was on our Christmas list, offered us candy canes and coloring books and wished us a Merry Christmas in a friendly, although not overly jolly, manner.

Our next destination was Ward Parkway Mall, located at 85th and Ward Parkway.

Going through the West entrance, we ran directly into Santa. Although his area was modestly sized, it was filled with big presents, decorated trees and snow. Santa stood and greeted us with a jovial "Hello, there!" This time, Santa was looking



photo by Kathryn Fitzsimmons

Twins Isaac and William Schmidt, 4, and their brother Andrew, 3, pile onto Santa's lap at Ward Parkway mall.

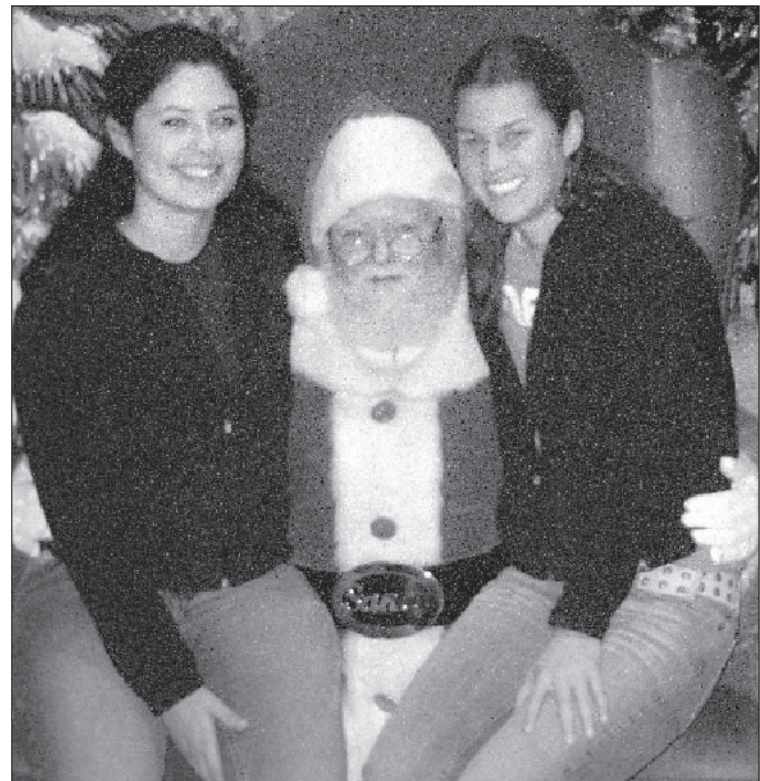


photo by Katie Kelly

Juniors Kathryn Fitzsimmons and Megan Kelly tell Santa Claus what they want for Christmas at Oak Park Mall.

much taller and more robust; his beard had also grown to a more desirable length. A family with three small boys walked by and Santa insisted they stop to say hello. His jolly nature and appropriate usage of "ho ho ho" won the boys over. He talked with them and their parents about Christmas wishes while we said goodbye.

Our third and final Santa Search stop was at Crown Center, located at 2450 Grand. The Crayola Christmas Land was filled with activities to entertain and Santa to capture photos with. The setup lacked in Christmas décor, but was filled with a Crayola themed ball pit, tunnels, slide and riddles on the walls.

Santa sat in the corner on his Crayola throne, greeting kids

with a pleasant expression and such phrases as "Hi, smiley." Although Santa was friendly, the overall atmosphere did not exude much Christmas cheer.

After our investigation was complete, we concluded the best Santa experience was at Ward Parkway. Crown Center, however, won overall for its one stop shop for Christmas. After visiting Santa, shoppers can walk outside and witness the Mayor's Christmas tree and go skating at the Ice Terrace. When shopping on the weekends, visitors can also listen to live Christmas music.

While each mall's Santa experience had its own strengths and weaknesses, no matter where you visit the fat man this holiday season your wishes will be sure to come true.

Holiday Movie Review:

Bad Santa

Running Time: 1 hour, 33 minutes

Starring: Billy Bob Thornton, Tony Cox and Bernie Mac

A smoking, swearing, alcoholic department store Santa (Thornton) and his African-American "little person" sidekick (Cox) work at different malls every year and rob the store every Christmas night.

Things grow complicated when the pair moves their scam to Tucson and encounters the Kid, who believes that Thornton's character is the real Santa.

Supporting cast includes the late John Ritter as a wishy-washy store manager and Bernie Mac as the ostrich-skin-wearing head of security. Marked by a relentlessly bad attitude and a biting satirical approach to the classic feel-good Christmas movie, this film is hilarious. But leave your little brother at home.

	Santa-like Appearance	Friendliness	Christmas Decor	Fun Factor	Overall
Crown Center	👴👴👴	👴👴	👴	👴👴👴	👴👴👴
Oak Park	👴	👴	👴👴👴	👴👴	👴
Ward Parkway	👴👴👴	👴👴👴	👴👴	👴	👴👴

TV specials bring holiday cheer

Katie Hembree
Staff Writer

Feeling bogged down with having to buy all those Christmas gifts? Can't seem to get into the holiday spirit? With Christmas just two weeks away, something must be done. Many people rely on made-for-television movies to boost good cheer. Aside from the classic films like *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and *It's a Wonderful Life*, several new films are to hit the small screens this season.

Secret Santa starring Jennie Garth, Steven Eckholdt and Barbara Billingsley will air Dec. 14 on NBC at 8 p.m. The film is about a young journalist, Rebecca (played by Jennie Garth), whose pessimistic take on Christmas lands her a small-town assignment for *The Indianapolis Sentinel*. Her task to unveil the identity of the town's cryptic philanthropist, "Secret Santa," ultimately leads her to discover the true meaning of Christmas.

Another must-see television event is the sequel to *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation 2: Cousin Eddie's Island*

Adventure starring Randy Quaid, Miriam Flynn, Ed Asner and Eric Idle will air Dec. 20 on NBC at 8 p.m.

When Cousin Eddie (Quaid), is bitten by a monkey at a nuclear-research testing plant, his lab partner avoids a potential lawsuit by offering Eddie and his family an all-expense paid trip to the South Pacific over Christmas. The family is ecstatic to escape frigid Chicago and finally go on a real vacation.

Along for the ride are Eddie's wife Catherine (Flynn), their intelligent son, their cousin, Audrey (Barron), a tour guide (Hi Lee) and Eddie's Uncle Nick (Asner). Uncle Nick is in denial because his wife (Garland) has recently left him for the Christmas tree deliveryman.

Eddie can't seem to go anywhere without causing trouble, and the family's fantasy vacation takes a turn for the worse when the family gets shipwrecked on a South Sea island. While Eddie tries courageously to satisfy his wife's wish to have food and shelter on Christmas, the rest of the family tries to survive the conditions, endure one another and sustain their Yuletide spirits.

Just when there seems to be hope of a rescue by wealthy Australian businessman (Stone), Eddie accidentally sabotages the rescue efforts. With the fate of his family in his hands, Eddie tries to return them safely from an unforgettable Christmas vacation back to the civilized world.

On Dec. 25 the Hallmark Channel will show the premiere of *A Carol Christmas* starring Tori Spelling, Gary Coleman and William Shatner. The film is a spoof of Charles Dickens's classic, *A Christmas Carol*.

Spelling portrays a "Scrooge-like" television talk-show host who is haunted by the ghost of Christmas past, played by Gary Coleman. The talk show host is then given a chance to redeem herself and become a new and improved person. Catch this film at 7 p.m.

If none of these new movies spark your interest, the classics will be routinely shown as well. For a complete listing of holiday movies, dates and times, go to www.newsday.com, click on "entertainment," then click "television" and then click "movies" under *holiday TV schedule*.

Hot presents lose luster after holidays

Maggie Mullane and Leslie Herring
Staff Writers

What do Nintendos, Cabbage Patch Kid dolls, Cool Tools, Tickle Me Elmos, Beanie Babies, Tamagotchis, Furbies and Razor Scooters all have in common?

At one point they were all top-selling Christmas gifts. Remember that cute little Tamagotchi you had when you were a kid? Remember spending hour after hour feeding him, bathing him, and playing with him? Remember sneaking him into school and hiding him in your desk so the teachers wouldn't see?

Those were the good ol' days, when the only thing you had to worry about was whether or not you had to pick up more of your Tamagotchi's excretions.

Some of these fads were a little more understandable, like Cool Tools and Razor scooters (admit it, they really were a lot of fun to ride around on). But, Furbies got really annoying really fast, Tamagotchis died and Cabbage Patch Kid (CPK) dolls made you wonder why you were allowed to play with a doll that slightly resembled Chuckie.

With the exception of a few fads, most died out rather quickly. Tamagotchis only lasted three years, Furbies were discontinued after four years and those CPK dolls are still around, haunting

Believe it or not, Cabbage Patch Kid dolls were created by a 21-year old man name Xavier Roberts in 1976. He sold them for \$40 a piece and each came with its own birth certificate. Original Appalachian Artisans Inc. began making them in mass in 1982, but they caught on big in 1989. By 1990, 10 million dolls had been sold in the US alone.

They became the official mascot for the 1996 US Olympic Team in Atlanta. So, while they are ugly and look absolutely nothing like a real baby, CPK dolls were a huge hit and continue to be one of the highest selling dolls.

Then along came the Tamagotchis: the hand held pet that you got to help grow into a healthy adult. When they got old or died you could have a new one at the touch of a button. So really, were they teaching us anything useful or just how to kill annoying things that you were supposed to be "caring" for? It was the perfect pet.

Tamagotchis came into the US in 1997 and were an immediate hit. They sold for anywhere from \$16-\$30 and could be found in toy stores around the nation. They were everywhere: in kid's pockets, on their backpacks, hiding in their desks at school and strapped to clothing. They were supposed to teach responsibly to young children.

the strangest toys ever invented; it was most definitely one of the most obnoxious. On Christmas morning, it was the coolest things ever...until five o'clock that night when the annoying sounds and the constant nagging got so old that you had to smother it with a blanket and lock it in your closet to get it to shut up.

Furbies were introduced to the US in 1998. They went for around \$30 and at Christmas-time in 1998, every store was sold out. Parents were trampling over each other because they were in such high demand. Side note: Actually, parents just like to trample over each other in packed toy stores for fun. In the months of November and December alone, one million Furbies were sold.

To keep the Furbies happy, they had to be fed and played with, even though they could never die, unless they were burned at the stake or had a loss of battery power that you conveniently forgot to replace. Furbies could talk, and sleep and even learn new words. They were a hit until 2001 when they were discontinued.

With the death of Furbies, Tamagotchis and Beanie Babies, we hope you learned your lesson. So, when writing to Santa to tell him what you are wishing for this Christmas, remember that

Growing up changes view of Christmas

Cierra Obioha and Tyler Yarbrough
Staff Writers

Ah, to be a child again on Christmas, indulging in fantasies of Santa Claus, Barbie dolls, and *Nestlé's* hot cocoa.

Many children all over the United States wait for Christmas anxiously, hoping Santa will give them exactly what they want.

But as they grow into teenagers, their perception and meaning of Christmas will drastically change as it did for many girls here at STA.

"When I was a child, Christmas was just a time for presents, decorating trees and carols," said Freshman Laura Goede. "Now, as a teen [Christmas] means a lot more. It means getting together with family and having time to stop and appreciate people I love."

Though a few teens said Christmas was cherished more as a child because of their magical experiences, many cherish Christmas now even more.

But for some, Christmas has lost the sparkle it once had. Is this because Christmas is more memorable as a child? When asked, many teens answered yes.

"I remember my sister and I would get really excited," said Sophomore Melinda Krum. "We used to wake up early, sit up at the top of the stairs and ask our parents, 'Can we come down yet?'"

Though children experience many memorable moments, teens understand the true meaning of the holiday season.

"What I remember mostly about Christmas was how [my family and I] woke up and went to Mass," said Junior Alyssa Mora. "[My brother and I] would be so excited to get out and open our presents. But now that I'm older and we still go to mass, I cherish Christmas more now because I understand

the meaning of Christmas better and realize it's not about gifts."

According to students, Christmas is more appreciated now as teens because with growth in age comes responsibilities such as school work, jobs, sports, and clubs.

"Because [my family and I] have so many activities going on, when Christmas approaches, I look forward to the [Christmas] break," said Goede. "It's my time to just relax."

Not only does the sentimental value of Christmas change from when one was a child until when she becomes a teen, but the thought of giving and receiving as well.

Are parents able to keep up with the pace of their children's Christmas list to avoid letting them down?

The list grows from a three year old asking for a pony to a 16 year old asking for a car.

"I have a son who is 23 and a daughter who is 21," said Librarian Mrs. Jackie Hershewe. "[My husband and I weren't] afraid of disappointing them, though I'm sure they were. We just decided how much we wanted or could afford to spend and went from there. We would also do a family activity, like go to the movies, to take away from the whole idea of gift receiving on Christmas."

The overall theme of giving and receiving changes as children grow into young adults. Senior Andrea Horn says that as you get older, Christmas is more about giving gifts than getting them.

"When I was little, it was all about getting gifts and being happy," said Horn. "Now, it always feels good to give."

During Christmas, feelings of joy and visions of laughter touch not only the children, but sparks something special in everyone.

Holiday shoppers go to the extreme to find, purchase perfect presents

Alex Hercules
Staff Writer

Every year millions of people wait for the day after Thanksgiving to begin their shopping. The day after Thanksgiving is the biggest shopping day of the year.

"I couldn't wait to start my Christmas shopping this year," said Sophomore Molly Wilkerson. "But, sometimes the way people act during holiday shopping scares me!"

Everyone can see Christmas spirit around town as people start to decorate their houses and Santa comes to every mall. But, not everyone shows Christmas spirit when it comes to shopping.

An incident that happened in Germantown, Maryland at a Wal-Mart this year showed that not everyone is "jolly" during this season. A fight broke out over the two big sellers: 20-inch flat screen TVs for \$99 and DVD players for \$29. Police were called in to handle the crowd. Soon the fight died down.

"I laughed when I saw the incident on TV," said Freshman Jessie Kramer. "I mean [the shoppers] really got into their holiday shopping."

STA students say that they are not nearly as crazy as the Wal-Mart shoppers, but they still love to shop. Some students, like Sophomore Claire Foley love to shop not only for friends and family but, for themselves as well during the holidays.



photo by Rachel Straughn

Shoppers search for holiday gifts at Independence Center in Independence, as do many people across the country during the holiday season. Independence is one of the many area malls that experiences an increase in business after Thanksgiving.

"This year I spent only about \$20 on my friends and about \$100 dollars on my family," said Foley. "But I also love to spend a lot on myself too."

Wilkerson also greatly enjoys shopping. She, like Foley, spends a lot of money while

doing her holiday shopping. Wilkerson spends more money on herself at different clothing stores and says that she loves the holiday season because it's the best time to shop.

"I usually will spend about \$150 on clothes when I go

shopping," said Wilkerson. "I love the holidays because there are always sales and it's a great time to go shopping for others and yourself."

Foley has advice for those who plan on shopping this holiday season.

"When you go shopping, even if you're a crazy shopper, stay away from the scary people who might come after you if you steal the last Hummer remote control car," she said. "And park somewhere close so you can get away!"

Christmas traditions have ancient roots

Colleen Slentz
Staff Writer

The Christmas season is here, and many of us are decking the halls, hanging up stockings and singing "O Christmas Tree." But how many people ever stop to wonder where these customs originated?

One of the most popular and well-known signs of Christmas is the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree as we know it can trace its roots back to the 1500s, although the custom was not prevalent outside of Germany until the 1800s.

The Christmas tree's origins can be found in the religious plays which were popular in Europe in the middle ages, the most notable of these was the "Paradise Play." There was only one prop for this play: a fir tree adorned with apples.

Another possible source of inspiration for our Christmas tree is the ancient connection of the evergreen tree with rebirth and immortality.

Another of America's beloved traditions is Santa Claus. The Dutch can be credited for this tradition, as they brought their "Sinterklaas" with them to America and celebrated his feast day here. Santa Claus has many additional counterparts in other cultures, such as Father Christmas (Britain), Pere Noel (France) and La Befana (Italy).

Santa Claus is supposed to represent an actual saint of the fourth century, St. Nicholas who was Bishop of Myra (in present-day Turkey). Countless legends exist about him, but a recurring theme is that of his kindness to children.

People hang up stockings because of a legend about St. Nicholas. As the legend goes, he accidentally dropped some gold coins once while going down a chimney. If it had not been for a stocking left out to dry, the coins would have fallen through the ash grate and been

lost. Today, children still hang up stockings in hopes of finding something nice in them.

The Santa Claus figures of other cultures nearly always have a little helper, although these are un- like

Another common tradition we have is the mistletoe. Kissing under the mistletoe was most likely first established with the Roman festival of Saturnalia and with primitive marriage rites. This was done out of the belief that the mistletoe had the power to bestow fertility. In Scandinavia, the mistletoe was considered a plant of peace, under which enemies could declare a truce.

Today, kissing under the mistletoe is merely another part of Christmas. Point to remember: kissing under the mistletoe is traditionally interpreted as a promise to marry.

and love the Santa character because, although the kind Santa figure hands out gifts, the helper gives the parents of naughty children switches with which to beat them. This helper is called Black Peter (the Netherlands), Krampus (Austria) and Ruprecht (Germany) among others.

Behind the Christmas we know and love there is a fascinating web of history, religion and legends, but beneath it all lies the common thread that causes people to love Christmas: magic. This is the magic of Santa Claus and his reindeer, the magic of the three wise men visiting the Christ child and bearing gifts from afar and the magic inherent in the spirit of giving and generosity. This magic seizes our society for one month out of twelve.

St. Teresa's Academy, 5600 Main St., Kansas City, Missouri 64113 (816) 501-0011

Brittany Cummings	Santa
Jen Vogel	Mrs. Claus
Ann Langworthy	Prancer
Ali Ryan	Rudolph
Ali Sherman	Donner
Ann Stacy	Comet
Rachel Straughn	Vixen
Allison Jaros	Dasher
Katie Monaghan	Cupid
Kelly Woodward	Dancer
Katy Gorogenes	Blitzen
Rose Dillon	Abominable Snowman

Elves
Chandler Domian, Caroline Findlay, Kathryn Fitzsimmons, Katie Hembree, Alex Hercules, Leslie Herring, Molly Huber, Megan Kelly, Julia McQueeny-Thorpe, Maggie Mullane, Cierra Obioha, Colleen Slentz, Juana Summers, Tyler Yarbrough

Editorial Clause
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Letters Policy
The Dart encourages letters to Santa. All letters are to be submitted to Mr. Eric Thomas at the North Pole. Requests will be considered only after the

Twas the Night Before Finals...

By: Rose Dillon

Twas the night before finals and all through the campus, Not
a teacher was stirring; there was no one to stamp us
The books had been studied with painstaking care
In hopes that an A the report card would bear

The students were home, (maybe) sleeping in bed
While visions of testing time filled them with dread
With a full pot of coffee I started to cram
But something outside on the lawn when KABAM!

From out in the yard there arose such a clatter
I sprang from my desk to see what was the matter
Below on the grass there was standing a nun
Almost as scary as Attila the Hun

Isoiled my underpants in my alarm
"But hey, she's a nun; she can't do me much harm."
I descended the stairs like a spy in a movie
"Why, it's St. Teresa, now that's pretty groovy."

She turned and then gave me the end of her habit
With some trepidation, I reached out to grab it
We flew through the air kind of like Sally Field
"I like verry much thees new theater you beeld."

Now Rosa, she said kindly, with thick Spanish accent
"I need to make sure all these girls' grades are decent."
So quietly then, with her holy saint's powers
We undid in minutes what had taken hours

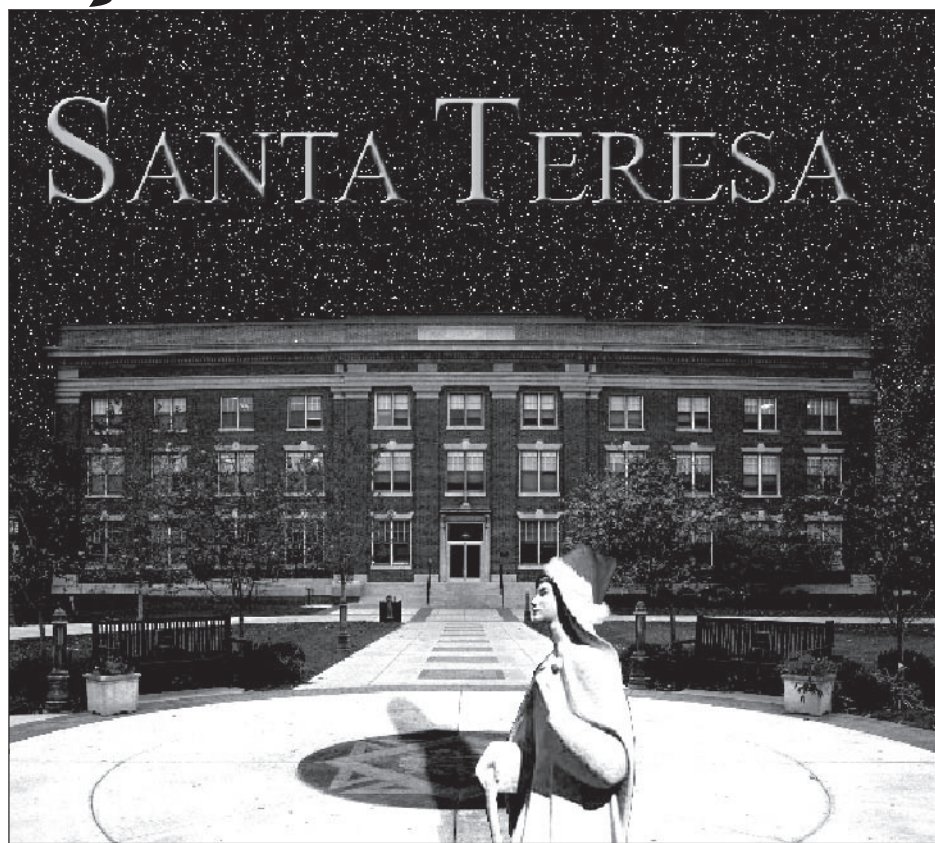
She raised all the grades by 15 percent
And to all the girls' inboxes letters she sent
"We regret to inform you this last-minute change
But suddenly schedules must be rearranged.

Due to construction we will not have finals.
You may spend your time listening to the Divinyls."
And back to my front porch we flew with a flash
And though I believed her, I just had to ask

Does that really mean that my worries are gone?
"Oh, honey, you're sleeping with your headphones on,"
Said my mother to me, as she climbed up the stairs.
She had caught me, sweet dreaming, and quite un
aware

Despite my protesting, she put me to bed
Where visions of Spanish nuns danced in my head
But I heard in my bedroom, just falling asleep
In accented English quite distant and sweet

God bless you, Academy, you Stars shining bright!
Happy finals to all, and to all a good night!"



cartoon by Colleen Slentz

Students Ponder A Badly Needed Snow Day

Molly Huber
Staff Writer

For many STA students, winter is a cherished time—a time for hot chocolate, sitting by the fire, comfy winter clothes, and, best of all, snow days.

Since snow has existed, youths everywhere have patiently awaited its coming each winter. The cold, white powder falls from the sky, bringing hope of freedom from school, if only for a day or two.

"I definitely like snow days because there's no school," said Sophomore Erica Houghland. "You wake up and hear you don't have school, then you can go back to bed, play in the snow, or do whatever you want to do."

On average, STA receives two snow days per school year. The decision of whether or not to call off school is based upon the amount of snow and ice present,

and how hazardous the conditions are for new drivers, according to Ms. MaryAnne Hoecker.

"Ice and snow are huge concerns for us," said Hoecker. "Sometimes it's a very difficult call, but we make the best decision we can."

Some students are displeased with the amount of snow days allowed, especially last school year.

"I thought we should have had more snow days [last year]," said Sophomore Leah Blake, "especially that time when every other school was off and we weren't."

Senior Kelly Shuss agrees that last year was disappointing because STA received one day off due to snowy conditions.

"My freshman and sophomore years, we had two snow days in a row and it was really cool," said Shuss. "We only had one last year, but any snow days are good.

I can't complain."

On the snow days that STA is allowed, students engage in many activities, none of which are related to school, ranging from playing football in the snow to simply sleeping all day. Going sledding is a must for most students.

"My favorite thing to do is go sledding at Suicide [Hill], but anywhere with a good hill will work," said Shuss.

For Blake, sledding is her fondest snow day memory. At Roe Park last year, Blake and her friends met at Roe Park, and her friend's mother tied a sled to the back of her SUV and gave rides across the field.

"It was really cold that day, but I was having so much fun I hardly noticed," said Blake. "I fell off [the sled] a lot, but I had such a great time."

As for indoor activities on snowy days, sitting in front of the fireplace, watching

movies, and drinking hot chocolate (with marshmallows, of course) are popular with STA girls.

"I love watching movies and drinking hot chocolate," said freshman Meredith Stoops. "I usually watch 'While You Were Sleeping.' It's a good snow day movie." As for this school year, STA students are already making snow day plans.

"I'll probably go sledding on Suicide because that won't be an option next year when I'm in college," said Shuss. "I also want to spend as much time with my friends as possible, just hanging out and having a good time."

Some students, such as junior Allison Brown, are opting to unwind after an exhausting first semester.

"I plan on just sleeping and relaxing," said Brown. "I have a low tolerance for the cold anyway."

photo poll: What is your most difficult resolution for 2004?



"To get better grades."
Stephanie Cashen, senior



"To shave my legs everyday."
Kaitlin O'Malley, junior



"Not to kill my brother."
Victoria White, sophomore



"To grow a few inches."
Melissa Rhodes, freshman



"To lose the weight I gained back." (lost 30, gained 15)
Ms. Pat Dunlay, English teacher