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## December crammed with Santa photo-ops

BY KATIE HOLLAND

You wake up to frost on the ground. The sound of jingling bells fill the air everywhere you go. Retailers are vying for your money, and you feel a constant urgency to “finish up” the Christmas shopping. This kind of sensory overload can only mean one thing: it’s December.

During the few weeks leading to Christmas, children are restless with excitement, thinking about Santa, reindeer and, of course, presents. Adults are just generally stressed out.

Luckily, the tri-city area offers a variety of activities to keep you and your family occupied, entertained and (hopefully) relaxed in the meantime.

• Pictures with Santa are available daily at Peachtree Mall during mall hours through Dec. 24. They’re also available at Riverside, Fort Benning at 6 p.m. on Dec. 11.

• The Ludy Christmas Spectacular, 5784 Ironstone Drive, is a computerized light display with more than 70,000 lights. Corresponding music is broadcast on 90.1 FM. The show can be seen 6-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 6-10:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, through Jan. 1. Donations for the Make-A-Wish Foundation are accepted. 706-888-1092.

• The Second Annual Broadway Holiday Lighting Event features snow flurries, the lighting of the Christmas tree and other downtown lights, live entertainment, holiday treats and a visit from Santa and his reindeer. The lighting takes place from 6 to 8 p.m. tonight at the 1100 block of Broadway. Bring a canned good to donate for the Columbus Business District’s Holiday Food Drive. 706-596-0111.

• CSU’s International House is hosting the Third Annual Christmas Flavors from Around the World from 6:30 to 8 p.m. tonight. For \$5, enjoy homemade holiday dishes from Germany, Mexico, Japan, India and Australia. 706-507-8852.

• Take a step back in time at the National Civil War Naval Museum at Port Columbus. The museum hosts a Victorian Christmas from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The museum will be decorated for the holidays in mid-19th century Victorian style. There will be a re-creation of a Holiday Officer’s Dinner and Thomas Nast’s version of Santa Claus will be available for professional pictures. Admission is free, but there is a charge for photos. 706-327-9798.

• Fort Benning’s Infantry Band will hold its Annual Holiday Concert at the Bill Heard Theatre at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday. Free, but you must have a ticket. 706-545-5313.

• Fort Benning’s Annual Tree and Menorah Lighting Ceremony is at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday. The traditional lighting of the

tree and menorah at the Field of Four Chaplains is followed by Santa riding in on a fire truck with a military police escort to visit with children and take pictures. 706-545-3512.

Ÿ The Annual Tower Lighting at Fort Benning's Eubanks Field will be 3:30 p.m. Dec. 12. Free family activities and music will lead up to Santa's jump onto the field (weather permitting) at 5 p.m. Vendors, displays and a Stryker will be on hand while Santa visits with the children. 706-545-3512.

Ÿ George T. Bagby State Park and Lodge hosts Breakfast with Santa on Dec. 13 from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. A breakfast buffet will be set up in the Coleman Conference Center and photos of Santa with children will be available. The buffet costs \$5. There is an additional \$3 charge for parking. 229-768-2571.

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