

## HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

### NC symphony sets Lincolnton concert

The North Carolina Symphony will present its annual holiday pops concert on Thursday, December 12, 2002 at 8 p.m. at the Lincoln Citizens Center, 115 W. Main St., Lincolnton.

Conductor Jeffrey Pollock will lead the symphony in a concert of new and seasonal music.

Tickets cost \$20 for adults and \$8 for students. For information, call Steve Gurley at (704) 735-2041.

The program is sponsored by the Lincoln County Chapter of the North Carolina Symphony Society.

### Gaston theatre to host holiday classic

Gaston Dance Theatre will present the traditional holiday ballet, 'The Nutcracker,' during four performances this month at Gaston Day School in Gastonia.

Show dates are Friday, December 13, 2002 at 8 p.m., Saturday, December 14, 2002 at 10:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. and Sunday, December 15, 2002 at 2:30 p.m. Tickets cost \$15 for adults and \$10 for students and senior citizens. Group rates are available and a special children's rate will be offered for the Saturday morning performance.

For more information and ticket reservations, call (704) 865-5943.

### Christmas party set for senior adults

Gaston County Parks and Recreation will sponsor its annual senior adult Christmas party on Friday, December 20, 2002 from 1 - 3 p.m. at the Gaston County Citizens Resource Center in Dallas.

The event is free and sponsored by Alan G. Cloninger, Attorney at Law, and Partners Medicare Choice. Seniors age 60 and older are invited to enjoy an afternoon of entertainment, refreshments and door prizes.

For information, call (704) 922-2160. Any large groups planning to attend should RSVP the recreation office.

### Holiday parades set for this weekend

Christmas parades in four local communities will step off this weekend.

The Dallas Christmas Parade will be held on Friday, December 13 at 4 p.m. in the downtown area.

The Cherryville Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 14 at 10:30 a.m. along Main St.

The Bessemer City Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 14 at 1 p.m.

The Lincolnton Christmas Parade will be held on Sunday, December 15 at 4 p.m. in downtown Lincolnton.

## Time is now to select Christmas tree

By TODD HAGANS  
Republic Newspapers staff

While last week's ice storm may have delayed local folks' selection of a Christmas tree, the time is here to choose the perfect tree and begin decking the halls.

Make-shift Christmas trees lots have popped up around town while area grocery stores and garden centers offer a wide array of trees, including the popular Fraser fir.

While some people select a tree brought to a tree lot or garden center, some venture to farms to choose and cut their own tree. To assist with the process, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has compiled a directory of choose-and-cut tree farms across the state. The tree farm directory is available on the Internet at [www.ncgreenindustry.org](http://www.ncgreenindustry.org) or in book form by calling the Asheville Farmers Market at (828) 253-1691. The directory lists information about the tree farms including available varieties, hours of operation and directions.

State agriculture commissioner Meg Scott Phipps said the many tree farms across the state give a boost to the Tar Heel economy this time of year and adds to the holiday season by allowing residents to walk around the farm and select a tree.

"Purchasing a choose-and-cut Christmas tree not only supports local farmers and

the state, but it adds a sense of tradition to the holiday season," said Phipps.

The Tar Heel State has over 50 million Fraser firs growing on some 25,000 acres with many of the trees found on tree farms in 14 mountain counties. Colorado blue spruce, Norway spruce, Scotch pine and white pine are also grown in western North Carolina.

While the Fraser fir may be the most popular species for Christmas trees, Fraser fir and other varieties are grown in 80 of North Carolina's 100 counties. In the eastern counties, popular varieties include white pine, Virginia pine, Eastern red cedar and Leyland cypress.

Last year, more than four million trees valued at \$98

million were harvested from North Carolina farms. The state is the second largest Christmas tree producer in the United States behind Oregon.

To promote the choose-and-cut idea, Gov. Mike Easley declared the first week of December as 'Choose-and-Cut Christmas Tree Week' in North Carolina.

When it comes to decorating a live Christmas tree,

residents should keep safety in mind. Officials with the state fire marshal's office in Raleigh say the pairing of greenery with lights can make for a hazardous situation.

December is the peak month for candle fires with nearly twice the average number of incidents. Christmas tree fires cause an average of \$21 million in property damage each year in the United States.

When it comes to Christmas tree safety, officials advise residents to turn off tree lights before going to bed or leaving the house. Decorate the tree using on UL-approved lights and cords. Residents should inspect lights for possible exposed or frayed cords, loose connections or broken sockets and never overload extension cords with lights. Use only one string of lights on one extension cord and never place an extension cord under carpet. When using artificial greenery, make sure that it is flame retardant.

In North Carolina alone, nearly 100 residential fires were caused by Christmas tree lights and other lighted decorations.

### HOMES TOUR

### Tour changes to Sunday in Bessemer City

Power outages in Bessemer City forced organizers of the annual Christmas Tour of Homes to postpone the event until Sunday, December 15, 2002 from 2 - 6 p.m.

The tour sponsored by the Bessemer City History and Arts Society was originally scheduled for Saturday, December 7.

This year's tour includes six destinations including the homes of Jessie and Janice Putnam at 111 W. Ormand Ave., Gay and Sandy Stinnett at 601 E. Maryland Ave., Tim and Leigh Ann Rhinehart at 112 W. Washington Ave., Grady and Phyllis Herman at 402 W. Virginia Ave. and Curtis and Renee Williams at 407 W. Virginia Ave. The sanctuary of First Wesleyan Church located at 510 E. Alabama Ave. is also featured on the tour, where refreshments will be served to tour participants in the family life center.

For ticket information, call Sarah Cash at (704) 629-2163 or Patsy Lindsay at (704) 629-2533.

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