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NEW MEXICO
NEWS

MERRY CHRISTMAS

HOME FOR THE

Holidays

HAPPY NEW YEAR

SHOPPING LOCAL
ACTIVITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY
HOLIDAY DECOR TIPS AND TRICKS
MAKE CHRISTMAS EVEN MORE SPECIAL FOR KIDS
TIMELESS TRADITIONS



Holiday shopping? Try it at home

❑ Spending money locally a 'circular success.'

By Grant McGee

THE STAFF OF THE NEWS
gmcgee@thenews.email

There are a number of reasons why it's a "good thing" to shop local for Christmas.

Just ask Tina Dziuk, executive director of Clovis Economic Development.

"Shopping local has a tremendous impact on cities like ours. Clovis depends heavily on money spent locally to maintain government operations," Dziuk told The News this month.

In an email, she pointed out gross receipts taxes collected from businesses in Clovis are sent to the state, "but then our city receives 43% of that money back."

"Those tax dollars are then used for things such as roads, public safety, public parks, and other priorities that impact local residents."

Dziuk noted "as an economic

developer, I'm going to talk economy first."

"However, and I'm sure our neighbors in Portales would agree, the very best reason I can think of for shopping locally is this: The business owners in our communities work hard to bring us shopping, food, entertainment, and recreation," she said.

Dziuk went on to point out "these businesses support our kids in athletics, band, 4H, FFA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and many other programs."

"Keeping our money locally shows our appreciation to the businesses shaping the future of our youth," she said.

It works like this:

"We support our businesses, they support their community and the city, the city provides public services, and we keep repeating the process. Spending money locally is a circular success that ensures our communities continue to grow and prosper," Dziuk said.

The Roosevelt County Community Development

Corp. also encourages shopping local.

"Not only do our dollars benefit our local businesses, but we are building relationships and partnerships with our vendors," Jodi Diaz said.

Diaz is the executive director of the RCCDC.

Diaz believes Portales/Roosevelt County businesses "offer very unique services and products that might not be available online or in other areas."

Diaz summed up her thoughts on the matter in an email: "Save time and money, shop Portales."

Quaylene Parkey agreed with Diaz. Parkey has been executive director of the Roosevelt County Chamber of Commerce since Nov. 1.

Parkey pointed out Portales businesses "offer personalized service, i.e. gift wrapping and exchanges that you will not find in larger stores."

"Most of the time you can find just what you are looking



Courtesy Photo

Ashleigh Cooper, a personal trainer, and Britney Watts from Clovis Cryo showcase their weightlifting skills during the Clovis Main Street Christmas Lights Parade.

for right here at home. Our local shops offer a wide variety of unique products that you will not find in chain stores," Parkey said.

And there's this: Local shops "know their customers," Parkey said. "So if you are not sure what the people on your list want for Christmas, the shop owners or staff can likely tell you what your family

members or friends have had their eye on."

Parkey, like Dziuk, noted it's our local businesses that support our youth.

"Most, if not all, of our local businesses have supported the community with money and manpower throughout the year in everything from Little League to high school sports. They support us and in turn we



Correspondent photo by Gwyn Del Toro

Holiday lights have been up around the region since last month. This popular display is at 2424 Fairway Terrace in Clovis



Correspondent photo by Kristin Shillingburg

Portales held its annual Christmas Lights Parade on Dec. 6.

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Fun ways to delight kids on Christmas Eve

From tracking Santa online to enjoying festive crafts and lights, these ideas can help you bring extra cheer to the season.

Parents know that nothing quite matches the excitement young children feel on Christmas Eve. On the day before Christmas, youngsters anxiously anticipate the arrival of Santa Claus that evening, and are perhaps even more excited by the prospects of the following morning, when they'll race into the living room and discover all that the jolly old elf left behind.

Christmas Eve seems to have some built-in magical components, but there are a handful of ways parents can make the day even more special for children.

- **Track the big guy's movements online.** The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and its predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD), has tracked Santa's Christmas Eve flight for more than 60 years. Beginning on Christmas Eve, families can track Santa's movements across the globe at Noradsanta.org. Kids can visit the site to see where Santa is at any given moment on Christmas Eve, growing more excited as the big fella gets closer and closer to their own region.

- **Create a Christmas Eve craft.** Gather children and their cousins and/or friends to create a special Christmas Eve craft or decoration



that can be displayed next year. This is a great way to channel youngsters' nervous Christmas Eve energy into something productive, and it can make for a great tradition families can continue even after kids are grown.

- **Watch a favorite Christmas movie.** Hollywood has never shied away from holiday fare, so there's no shortage of festive films to enjoy with youngsters on Christmas Eve. Enjoy a classic like the 1947 film "Miracle on 34th Street" starring Natalie Wood as the adorable "Susan Walker" and Edmund Gwenn as "Kris Kringle," or go with something more recent, such as "The Grinch," the 2018 adaptation of the Dr. Seuss book How the Grinch

Stole Christmas.

- **Take a nighttime stroll or drive to see the lights.**

Lighting displays are another component that makes the holiday season so special. After Christmas Eve dinner, take a stroll through your neighborhood to see the lighting displays or climb into the car to take in a different neighborhood's offerings if you're already familiar with those in your own neck of the woods.

Christmas Eve is a magical day for youngsters and their parents. Some simple ideas can make the day even more meaningful for children and their families.

Spread cheer with these holiday games

The holidays bring together friends, neighbors and family members to celebrate some of the most festive days of the year. Although celebrants often incorporate traditions they hold dear this time of year, downtime provides an opportunity to embrace new games and entertainment ideas as well.

The following are some fun games to play this holiday season that can help to break the ice and keep everyone laughing.

Reindeer Games

Everyone knows that Rudolph wanted to have fun and participate in "reindeer games," but he was left on the sidelines. Inspired by the tune, everyone can participate in reindeer games at your home. These types of games can include tests of endurance and dexterity, like fruitcake-eating contests, running races or doing hurdle competitions in the yard.

Candy Cane Home Runs

Participants can see how well they can launch a marshmallow into the outfield by hitting it with a candy cane taking the place of the

baseball bat. Each participant gets three swings. The person with the most home runs wins.

Guess the Gift

In this game, party hosts wrap up five oddly shaped gifts specifically for the game (the gifts may be oddly shaped or just the wrapping as a decoy). Players take turns trying to guess what is inside and mark down their answers on sheets. One by one the gifts are revealed. If anyone guesses the gift, it is given as a prize. If more than one person guesses a gift, come up with a fun way to break the tie, such as rock, paper, scissors or thumb wrestling.

Present Stackers

This requires keeping a collection of oddly shaped gifts at the ready. Game participants try to stack the presents as tall as they can without them toppling over.

Fishing for Fun

Hang strings on the straight ends of candy canes to fashion fishing poles, with the curved ends serving as the "hooks." Participants try to "fish" smaller candy canes out of a bowl and see how many they can reel in.

Classic holiday films the whole family can enjoy

Celebrants owe the joy of the holiday season to various components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year. Holiday films also do their part to make the season so special.

Many people have their own favorite holiday films, and the following are some that can engage viewers who are young or simply

young at heart.

"A Christmas Story"

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Rider BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages

to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

"Little Women"

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, the 1994 telling of this classic

follows the March sisters, who confront financial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. While it's not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

"Klaus"

Not as well-known as other animated holiday flicks, "Klaus," released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to work in a frozen town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children's faces.

"Meet Me in St. Louis"

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World's Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

"The Santa Clause"

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad Scott (Tim Allen) accidentally kills a man in a Santa suit, he magically becomes the next Santa. He must learn

to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

"Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas"

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production is a television special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what's needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.

Films are a popular component that help to make the holiday season so special.

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Why celebrate Boxing Day?

The holiday season is filled with activities and steeped in tradition. The magic does not end when Thanksgiving, Christmas or Chanukah have come and gone. While people mark off the days until they can count down the hours on New Year's Eve, another event between Christmas Day and December 31 merits attention as well.

Boxing Day is celebrated in Great Britain, Canada and British Commonwealth nations like Australia and New Zealand. The holiday originated in the United Kingdom but other European nations have since embraced it. Boxing Day coincides with the Christian holiday Saint Stephen's Day, which is considered the second day of Christmas.

St. Stephen was a deacon the Apostles ordained to take care of widows and the indigent.

Boxing Day dates back to 1871, according to Love to Know, and came about as a custom for tradesmen and women to collect "Christmas boxes" of money or presents on the first weekday after Christmas in exchange for good service throughout the year. Many workers, particularly household servants, had to work on Christmas Day, so Boxing Day provided an opportunity for them to visit with their own families. The workers took home boxes filled with foods and other gifts. In the U.K., Boxing Day is a government-mandated holiday. If it falls on a weekend, then the holiday will be

observed on the following Monday. Schools and many organizations are closed on this day. Stores tend to be open, as Boxing Day sales are very popular.

As with most events, Boxing Day features some notable customs.

- Workers, especially those in service positions, are honored. It's customary to give a financial gift to people who provide services throughout the year. This includes mail carriers, sanitation workers, hair stylists, and others.

- Contribute to the less fortunate. People often donate food to local food banks and support charities.

- Watch or attend sporting events. Boxing Day also is marked by

sporting events like horse racing and football, with the U.K. often hosting a full day of Premier League games.

- Take a chilly swim. Some individuals enjoy participating in Polar Plunges to raise money for charities. One annual event features people jumping into the English Channel, and similar plunges are held elsewhere.

- Head to the stores. Boxing Day is similar to Black Friday in the United States. Boxing Day is filled with slashed prices and bargains for shoppers who are eager to spend holiday gift cards.

- Meet up with friends and families. On Boxing Day, friends frequently get together to socialize and go out for dinner or drinks.

Fireplace safety tips for the holidays

Gatherings with family and friends are an integral component of the holiday season. Certain rooms in the house are on display more than others, with kitchens, dining rooms and living areas serving as popular places to congregate. Of course, fireplaces also serve as popular gathering spots in homes that feature them.

Lighting a fire in the hearth can make any space more cozy, but doing so comes with some hazards. Consider these fireplace safety tips in advance of the holiday entertaining season.

- Have the fireplace inspected and swept professionally. Prior to lighting the first fire of the season, ensure that a professional inspects the fireplace, chimney and venting to ensure everything is in good condition. The chimney also should be swept to remove excess debris and buildup that could pose a fire hazard.

- Keep items away from the fireplace. Wrapping paper, rugs, clothing, magazines, and the like should be kept at least three feet away from the flames, suggests the American Red Cross. Also, make sure decorations are hung securely and a safe distance away from the fire.

- Check your smoke alarms. Be sure the home has working smoke alarms on every

level of the house. And keep a fire extinguisher close to the fireplace.

- Never burn wrapping paper. Wrapping paper contains additives, like dyes, that make it burn extremely hot. Do not think of discarding wrapping paper by burning it in the fireplace.

- Keep the tree a safe distance away. Although it makes for the perfect Christmas photo backdrop, Christmas trees and fireplaces should not be near each other. Also, the Christmas tree is not safe to burn in the fireplace after the season, as the wood has not been properly dried or seasoned.

- Use a screen on the fireplace. Make sure the fireplace is properly covered by a screen to stop embers from escaping when the wood pops and sparks. The screen also can help keep decorations and other objects from falling into the fire.

- Keep the fireplace clean. Promptly remove any ash and debris from the fireplace after it has cooled to improve indoor air quality and provide greater control over the next fire when it is burned, advises the American Society of Home Inspectors.

Fireplaces bring warmth and add ambiance to a home, particularly during the holidays. But safety must prevail when lighting fireplaces.



Global traditions for ringing in the new year

It is time to turn the page on one year and usher in another. Each December 31, people all over the world reminisce, celebrate, plan, and party in honor of the changing calendar.

Many are likely familiar with some of the common ways to ring in the new year, which include champagne toasts, fireworks and watching the ball drop in Times Square. Yet, there are many other ways to celebrate this occasion and welcome a new year with hope and good luck. Enjoy these ways to commemorate the start of 2025.

- Make some noise.** Although fireworks are commonplace on New Year's Eve in various locales around the world, in Thailand it once was traditional to fire guns to frighten off demons. National Thailand reports

that it is no longer legal to fire weapons during New Year's Eve festivities, but other noisemakers can simulate the ancient tradition. Thailand also has its own New Year celebration in April called Songkran, a three-day event. It's customary to splash water and shoot colorful water guns, which is another idea for ringing in the new year.

- Smash pomegranates** for luck. Many have heard of smashing grapes to make wine, and the band Smashing Pumpkins has millions of devoted followers across the globe. The comic Gallagher used to smash watermelons on stage. But in Turkey, smashing a pomegranate outside your front door is said to bring good luck. The fruit is seen as a symbol of prosperity, abundance and health.

- Make some good luck** "Hoppin' John." Hoppin'

John is a traditional New Year's Day dish from regions of the southern United States. The dish is made with black-eyed peas and pork bacon and is said to bring good luck to those who consume it for the new year, according to the Old Farmers Almanac.

- Choose honey-dipped apples.** People can take a page from the Jewish New Year tradition, which sees celebrants dipping apples in honey for a sweet new year. Rosh Hashanah takes place in late summer or early fall because it follows the Hebrew lunisolar calendar. However, anyone can apply similar customs to the New Year's celebrations taking place each January 1.

- Put on some polka dots.** In the Philippines, wearing polka-dotted clothing on New Year's Eve is a tradition said to bring good fortune in the

new year, according to Philstar Life.

- Watch a sunrise.** Chances are many revelers are staying up late on New Year's Eve and into the next day, so they'll have ample opportunity to catch the sunrise. In Japan, watching the first sunrise of the new year is called "hatshinode," and is a practice thought to bring good fortune.

- Grab some cash.** There's a perpetuating superstition that it's better to have some extra money in your wallet to enter the New Year full of financial prosperity. Also, it's best to wipe out any unpaid debts before December 31 disappears; otherwise, the months ahead might not be financially sound.

New Year's traditions have persisted throughout the years and are borne of customs from all over the world.

Creating a warm welcome for guests

Millions of individuals travel to see family and friends during the holiday season. The automotive group AAA estimated that roughly 115 million travelers planned to travel 50 miles or more during the 2023 year-end holiday travel period, which the organization defined as a 10-day window that began on December 23 and ended on New Year's Day. Holiday hosts can embrace these strategies as they prepare to welcome guests in the weeks ahead.

- Clear clutter from working spaces. The pandemic sparked some lasting changes, including a greater number of professionals working from home. Some do so part-time while others have become fully remote workers. That shift has led many homeowners to transform guest rooms or pockets of shared living spaces into home offices, which can make a residence feel a little more cramped once guests arrive. Declutter these spaces prior to guests' arrival so they have ample room to relax and maneuver in guest rooms and to ensure there's no shortage of seating or room to spread out in shared spaces like living rooms or dens.

- Provide some guest room creature comforts. Some creature comforts in the guest room can make guests feel right at home. A smartphone charging dock on a bedside nightstand is a nice touch that allows guests to keep their chargers tucked into their luggage, ensuring they won't be forgotten when the time comes to return home. A scent diffuser in the guest room is another nice touch that can help travel-weary guests relax and unwind during their stay. A small handful of books and magazines left on a guest room dresser so guests have some nighttime reading material is another welcoming gesture that can make them feel right at home.

- Ask ahead about food allergies. Cooking is a big part of holiday hosting, as the dinner table is a relaxing setting to catch up with loved ones. Prior to planning a holiday hosting menu, hosts can reach out to guests and ask if they have any food allergies or other dietary restrictions. This small gesture lets guests know hosts are thinking of them even before they arrive, which can establish the welcoming vibe hosts are aiming for.

- Designate a guests-only bathroom, if possible. If hosts' homes have multiple full bathrooms, designate one exclusively for guests during their stay. This gesture affords guests some privacy that they're sure to appreciate. Parents can explain this gesture to kids before guests arrive so there's no confusion during their stay.

As individuals prepare to welcome loved ones into their homes this holiday season, they can embrace various strategies to welcome their guests and ensure their stay is comfortable and relaxing.

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Real or artificial? The Christmas tree debate continues

People are passionate about the things they love. Through the years there have been many debates over a wide range of topics, from which cola brand to back to which book/movie character was more deserving of a lead character's heart.

The holiday season features a classic example of taking sides. The debate surrounding artificial Christmas trees and their natural alternatives will pick back up this holiday season. As with any debate, there are two sides to every story. Those on the fence as to whether to go real or fake this year can consider these pros and cons of each.

Real tree

Pros: One of the biggest advantages of a real tree is its pleasing aroma. The

fresh pine smell of a natural tree can trigger memories of Christmases gone by and make a home feel cozy and holiday-ready. It takes many years for a Christmas tree to grow large enough to be harvested, and as it grows it provides a habitat for animals and benefits the planet by absorbing carbon and providing oxygen, according to Megan Quinn, coordinator of conservation biology at the Nature Conservancy of Canada. When trees are cut down, two or three may be planted in their place. Buying a real tree from a business nearby also supports the local economy.

Cons: Real trees can be messy and require upkeep like daily watering. Cutting down a tree oneself and bringing

it home can help guarantee freshness, but there is really no way to know when trees at Christmas tree lots were cut down. This means that needles can begin falling the moment the tree is placed in the living room. Another thing to note is that live trees can't be placed just anywhere. They shouldn't be next to fireplaces or heat sources, where they can dry out prematurely and pose a fire risk. A real tree also might have unwelcome bugs or animals hiding within its branches. According to Penn State Extension, anything from spotted lanternflies to spiders to aphids to bark beetles or lice may be on a real tree.

Artificial tree

Pros: Artificial trees can be

convenient because they are easy to assemble, disassemble and store. Plus, you don't have to venture out each year to get one. Unlike real trees, artificial trees do not require watering or vacuuming to manage fallen needles. Since artificial trees can be reused for numerous seasons, they may be more cost-effective than real trees. Artificial trees can last anywhere from six to 10 years, but that life span depends on the quality of the tree and how well it is maintained. Artificial trees also guarantee a uniform, pleasing look year after year.

Cons: Artificial trees are made from polyvinyl chloride and other plastics, and environmentalists attest that those ingredients make them bad for the environment.

According to an assessment study of artificial versus natural trees published in 2009 by Ellippos, a Montreal-based sustainable development consulting firm, an artificial tree emits 8.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year, compared to 3.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide emitted by a real tree in a given year. In addition, the chemicals used in manufacture may have adverse effects on human health and often are non-recyclable. Artificial trees also take up room in homes year-round since they need to be stored. Plus, they don't emit a pleasing aroma.

The debate over a real or artificial Christmas tree is sure to rage on year after year, so it's up to holiday celebrants to make their pick.

Get creative with holiday decor

The end of the year is upon us and that often involves decorating a home in its holiday finest. According to Today's Homeowner, nearly 70 percent of Americans plan to display outdoor holiday decorations. Among those choosing to decorate, 34 percent will do so before Thanksgiving.

Everyone has a different vision of a well-appointed holiday home, but there's always room to make things more unique and creative. These ideas can add a little extra to holiday displays.

Decorate other rooms

Who says holiday decorating is exclusive to living and dining areas? Think about decorating unexpected places, like swapping out everyday

towels and shower curtains with something festive. Swags of greenery wrapped in lights can be added to bed frames.

Coordinate the ornaments

Identify a color theme and then showcase it with ornaments. Think about matching the ornaments to the presents wrapped under the tree as well. Purchase white package paper and color or paint the paper to be the same hues as the ornaments on the tree boughs.

It's hip to be square

While round wreaths are traditional, make your own wreaths in a different geometric shape by using wire or another material as the frame. Square wreaths may be unexpected, and you also can turn the square on its side for a

diamond shape.

Add a spot of color

Certain holidays are known for their particular color palettes, such as red and green for Christmas. But you also can do something unexpected. Whether using a lighter shade of the same color family or adding an accent color like purple or blue, you can change things up in a creative way.

Make an unexpected bouquet

Swap flowers for pine cones, berries and greenery in unique vessels. For example, arrange your centerpiece in a tall fountain glass or even a cocktail shaker.

Try a different accent tree

Use a styrofoam cone as the base of a tree for a



centerpiece or sideboard. Attach poinsettia branches for a vibrant red tree, or stacked lemons or oranges filled with greenery for a fresh-smelling citrus creation.

Suspend belief

Instead of attaching a tree topper to the tallest bough, hang one from the

ceiling just above the tree to add even more whimsy.

Mix and match

When it comes to a holiday table, mix and match table settings for an eclectic tableau.

Shift into neutral

Instead of a large holiday display in familiar colors, rely on neutral,

wintery tones that will blend in with the home but add a festive touch. Natural wood, whites and creams, and muted greens can fill spaces.

Unique holiday decorations and schemes can be a great way to add new life to a home this December.

In the United States, the tradition of hanging stockings by the fireplace dates back to the early 19th century. The custom is said to be inspired by the story of Saint Nicholas, who was known for secretly giving gifts to those in need. One of the most popular legends involves Saint Nicholas helping a poor family by secretly placing gold coins in the stockings of their daughters, which were hung by the fireplace to dry. This act of kindness eventually evolved into the tradition of hanging stockings for Santa Claus, who now fills them with small gifts, candies, and treats on Christmas Eve. Over time, this charming practice became a central part of American holiday celebrations, with families around the country eagerly awaiting the surprises that appear in their stockings each year.

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- ▶ Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!
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- ▶ Frank Sinatra
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- ▶ O Tannenbaum
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- ▶ Vince Guaraldi Trio
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- ▶ Fairytale of New York
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- ▶ The Pogues featuring Kirsty MacColl
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- ▶ The Twelve Days of Christmas
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- ▶ The Ray Coniff Singers
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- ▶ Here Comes Santa Claus
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- ▶ Elvis Presley
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On behalf of Eric Dixon and Staff, we extend our heartfelt wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful holiday season. May this time of year bring joy, peace, and happiness to you and your loved ones.

We are deeply thankful for the trust you've placed in us and for the opportunity to serve our community. As we look to the New Year, we remain committed to providing you with exceptional legal support and guidance.

Wishing you all a joyful and prosperous New Year!

*Warm regards,
Eric Dixon, Attorney*

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