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Uptown Lexington, Inc. Announces Plans for 2011 Lighting of the Trees and Christmas Open House

Lexington, NC. It is beginning to look a lot like Christmas in historic uptown Lexington. Santa's gazebo is in place, the wreaths and banners have been installed on the historic light poles, and the tree lights are ready to be turned on. This weekend we will usher in the Christmas season with Uptown Lexington, Inc.'s (ULI) annual holiday events.

Presented by the Uptown Lexington Participating Merchants and the Board of Uptown Lexington, Inc. (ULI), the month of activities begins with the 4th Annual Lighting of the Trees on Saturday, November 19th at 6:30 pm followed by the 18th Annual Christmas Open House from 1-5 pm on Sunday.

"For many, these events begin their holiday season," said Walter Hoffman, President of the ULI Board of Directors. "Both are truly family friendly events that can be enjoyed by all ages. Our board and merchants invite everyone to come start their holiday season right here in historic uptown Lexington!"

"This is the fourth year the public has been invited to follow along as Tony Humphrey 'lights' all 43 trees along Main Street." said Edwards. Walkers will start the 12 block walk at the Bunce Buildings gazebo in the Conrad & Hinkle square at the corner of North Main and West Center Streets at 6:30 pm and continue until all the trees come alive with the magic of over 12,000 lights. "The sound of children telling Tony to 'Light That Tree' can be heard for blocks! Our uptown restaurants and coffee shops invite you to come uptown early or stay late and have dinner or dessert with them," said Edwards.

"People who have attended Christmas Open House in the past, will find their favorite activities along with some new things," said Jo Ellen Edwards, Executive Director of ULI.

"With Main Street from 3rd Street to 3rd Avenue and some side streets closed to traffic for Christmas Open House, it is a safe place to enjoy the many holiday activities while strolling the uptown district to shop and eat with our local merchants," said Hoffman.

Christmas Open House kicks off with Santa and Mrs. Claus's arrival in uptown at 1 pm. "We hear they are bringing some of their special friends from the North Pole including elves, a Gingerbread boy and girl and some other faces the children will find familiar too," said Edwards.

After arriving in the square, you can find Santa in front of Conrad and Hinkle inside the Bunce Buildings gazebo. Margaret Sink, a popular *Pigs in the City* artist, has hand painted a backdrop for photos with Santa. While David Burris is taking photos, children can tell Santa what they want for Christmas. Photos will cost \$5 each and will be available for pick up at the event.

While waiting to talk with Santa, children can stop by to visit with Mrs. Claus inside her Gingerbread House complete with giant pieces of candy. "Mrs. Claus always has a few stories about what's been happening at the North Pole," said Edwards.

The North Pole Express, a miniature train, takes children on a train ride up and down Main Street. Starting in front of the Historical Museum on South Main, the cost to ride for children under 12 is \$3.

"The holidays have become a wonderful way for us to give back to others," said Hoffmann. "This year, Uptown Lexington, Inc. is especially excited about the Christmas Open House Food Drive for Pastor's Pantry, a local agency who provides food for seniors. The collection will result in a 'Tree of Cans'. This project brings together five groups in a partnership to benefit seniors in our community." The first phase is being coordinated by the staff of Brinkley-Walser who began collecting food at their office on November 1st. The staff of Brinkley Walser will be in the square collecting the cans. Attendees are asked to bring a can of food to Christmas Open House.

"During the December 2nd, 9th, and 16th Christmas Strolls, come watch as the tree grows in the windows of Pandora's Books on West Second Avenue," said Edwards. The staff of Pandora's Books will be collecting food throughout December and you can also bring food to the strolls.

The "Tree of Cans" will be decorated with ornaments created by children during Arts United's art activity during Christmas Open House and with paper garlands crafted by G.R.A.C.E. girls from Grace Episcopal Church.

In addition to coloring ornaments for the 'Tree of Cans', children can write a letter to Santa that the elves will personally deliver to Santa and color a holiday picture in the Arts United for Davidson County's Children's Activity Area on West Second Avenue. A favorite activity during Summer Strolls is Sidewalk Chalk Art. Chalk will be available during Christmas Open House for children to decorate the streets and sidewalks.

Also on West Second Avenue, staff and volunteers from Lexington's Habitat for Humanity will help children 'build' a bird feeder with 'Bob the Builder'. A fund raiser for the organization, a \$1 donation helps the group pay for supplies. Artist Margaret Sink will be doing face painting with a holiday flare and Miss Charlotte, Uptown Lexington's mascot can also be found here.

A favorite of all ages since the first Christmas Open House are the horse drawn carriage rides with Heritage Farm and Carriages. "Many people look forward to seeing Steve and Anne Allred because they have become part of their holidays," said Edwards. "Employees of NewBridge Bank serve as our volunteer 'carriage attendants'." Carriage rides will start and end in the square at the corner of East Center and North Main adjacent to Main Street Deli. Rides are \$6 for adults and \$4 for children over 3 years of age.

Sounds of the season will fill the air in uptown from two stage areas.

Performing on a stage located on North Main beside of the Lexington Police Department will be The LeBeaus at 1 pm and Marble Alley Band at 2:45 pm. "Both of these groups are favorites," said Edwards. "Carols by the LeBeaus and Tim Ragan's versions of Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer are favorite memories for lots of people." Last year, students of CrossMovement Dance Ministry amazed attendees with their variety of dances and talent. With performers from 2-18 years old their dance routines to holiday music included a waltz, ballet, and contemporary dance.

Performing on the second stage at East 2nd Avenue and North Main will be the Sound of Light Band at 1 pm followed by Region 11 Girl Scouts from Davidson and Rowan Counties at 2:45 pm. Two choirs conclude the day. First Baptist Church Village Drive Choir sings at 3:30 pm followed by the New Faith Baptist Choir at 4:30 pm. Both choirs bring the sound of traditional carols to uptown.

Dressed as Victorian Carolers, choir members from Thomasville's Rich Fork Baptist Church will return to sing carols on the sidewalks and inside Participating Merchant Partners stores during the afternoon. "Their sound and costumes put us all in the holiday spirit last year. We are excited they will be with us again," said Edwards.

For those who collect Christmas ornaments, ULI and event sponsor, Hospice of Davidson County will be under the same tent in the square with their ornaments. ULI's ornament for 2011 is "Christmas Snow and features the square in the snow. The Hospice ornament is an angel that has been hand crafted locally by volunteers and Missions Pottery. Uptown Lexington's ornament supports installation and maintenance of lights along Main Street while the Hospice ornament supports their programs for the terminally ill in Davidson County.

Some of the other Christmas Open House activities include: Give a Kid a Coat with the Lexington Salvation Army in front of Lanier True Value Hardware. Bring a gently used coat and drop it off as you arrive at Christmas Open House! Look for Posh Paws white 'reindeer' and get some special reindeer food to put out on Christmas Eve. Stop by Sheets Dance Academy at 2 North Main to watch scenes from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker. Performances are at 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 pm.

“Our uptown Lexington merchants invite you to come uptown to shop and dine with them!” said Toby Prince, Chairman of the Uptown Lexington Promotions Committee. “You will find holiday decorations, music, specials and always a few surprises with our Participating Merchant Partners.”

“ULI thanks to the many volunteers, sponsors and Participating Merchant Partners who underwrite many of the costs for Christmas Open House” said Edwards.

Our 2011 sponsors are: Thomasville Medical Center, National Wholesale, BB&T, New Bridge Bank, City of Lexington Utilities, Turlington & Company, Lexington Investments, Mountcastle Insurance, Hospice of Davidson County, Bunce Buildings, Standell Properties, Evans Properties and Lexington Area Chamber of Commerce.

These are the 2011-2012 Merchant Partners and some of their specials for the day: All About Education will have an Open House special, Anabel’s Boutique and Gift Shop, Army Navy Store, Black Chicken Coffee has holiday flavors, have lunch and register to win a 6 foot stocking at Café 35, stop by Catherine’s Curtains for holiday decorating tips, Jeanne Leonard with the Cooperative Extension Service will be giving holiday cooking tips at Conrad & Hinkle Food Market, Gallery Hall invites you to come enjoy hot cider and cookies with them, Lanier True Value Hardware will have hot chocolate and cookies to warm you up, register for an ivy topiary at Magnolia Antiques and Gifts, Main Street Pizza & Deli will be open for lunch from 11-3, guess the identity of the pig ‘character’ for a discount at Memories on Main, register for free lipstick at Merle Norman Cosmetics, check out the Solatube specials at Natural Home Lite, come meet local authors at Pandora’s Books, Posh Paws Salon & Spa, Red Door Antiques of Lexington, Sheets’ Dance Academy, The Backyard Retreat, The Candy Factory, Triad PC Repair, The Olde Homestead, and Village Grill is open for lunch with specials for the day.

Coming soon....details about Christmas Strolls on December 2nd, 9th, and 16th.

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Want to go:

4th Annual Lighting of the Trees: Saturday, November 19, 6:30-7:15 pm

18th Annual Uptown Lexington Christmas Open House: Sunday, November 20, 1-5 pm

Both events are in Historic Uptown Lexington on Main Street from Third Avenue to Third Street and West Second Avenue

For more information: 336-249-0383 or visit www.uptownlexington.com.