

# Santa Brings Joy to Springfield

By Layla Hastings

Springfield's Santa's overarching goal is to spread cheer to as many children as possible. So it's natural that his alter ego, John MacDonald, is happy to stand in for the over-extended real Santa every chance he gets.

John, who as president of the Springfield Community Players, knows a lot about role playing. And Santa is a role that seems almost written just for him.

"I have been told by many that I wear my heart on my sleeve," says John.

"I began my journey as Santa Claus in 2017 when I received a call from Carrie Patch-Jewell, who came up with an amazing idea to help raise funds for the Springfield Parent Child Center by creating T'was the Night before Christmas Live at the Hartness House," says John.

"Since then I have been Santa for American Timeout Sports Bar and Grill, owned by Nick Koloski, whose family each year provides a Christmas dinner for families and friends struggling during the holiday season. I've been Santa for this program for three years," John says.

"This year I was approached by Caitlin Christiana with the Springfield Regional Chamber of Commerce to assist with the Town of Springfield's celebration of the holiday season and play the role of Santa Claus. Of course, I agreed with extreme joy and excitement," he says. That role involves ringing in Springfield's holiday season, and then spending a night a week meeting the community's youngsters in his little red house just off the town square.

Children sit on his lap and recite their wishlists. Santa knows not all parents can give their children everything they way, but he tries to instill the child with positive feelings

"I believe that we must embrace each child and do what we can to bring joy to them. Unfortunately, we are living in a world where children struggle, parents struggle and we all struggle and I want each child to walk away with hope, a sense of excitement for the season, and the idea that they are special even if its for just a few moments, days or months," Santa says as he sits in his house, waiting for the inevitable crush of kids.

"I hope that this brief visit will continue to remind them as they grow that each person has a heart and soul and we all must appreciate each other," Santa says.

**Continued to Page 3**



*Brothers Parker and Carson Farrar meet with Santa.*



## Santa Continued from Page 1

"As Santa I create a character that expresses compassion for each child that visits me. There are some children that are extremely nervous and once they step into the Christmas shed are scared. I do present them with a small teddy bear and at times I work with the parents to get the perfect picture."

"I don't find it difficult to work with children and if a child starts to panic or cry, I do allow the parents to step in quickly to save the day, and work with them to calm them down and to give them a moment. I work with the child and create a conversation that will help ease the fear. As a member of the global community I know a lot about the schools, and programs within our town, and by sharing this information in a way that relates to the child, does help them find comfort in my short visits."

So, what do kids want for Christmas these days. It runs the gamut.

"I will say when a child asks for specific items like Legos, American Dolls, or Ninja Turtles, I get excited and I acknowledge their request. When I hear children asking for laptop computers, iPhone 11 max pros and Play Station 3D VR goggles, I look at their parents and watch their reaction before I respond," according to Santa.

So what does John like best about his chosen role?

"I choose to do this for the children. I want the children to have the opportunity to feel love, compassion and hope during this time of year," he says laughing joyfully as he gently waves forward two boys waiting in line for their chance to tell Santa their holiday wishes.

## LOCAL SERVICE CLUBS

Please send your news to us at reporter  
@vermontel.net. We would love to share news of  
your service with the community.