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Christmas trees can now be picked up, dropped off

Metro-area residents have several options for disposing of evergreens

BY ANDREW J. NELSON
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Unlike those of us hoisting our fake trees back up into our attics after the holidays, those who prefer real Christmas trees will need to dispose of the evergreens.

What to do? Well, you can haul it to one of 14 Christmas tree drop-off spots in the Omaha metro area. These will be open until Jan. 8. There is no charge to drop off your tree.

» Tranquility Park, 120th Street and West Maple Road: north lot of soccer complex

» Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium: northwest corner of parking lot, near intersection of Bob Gibson Drive and South 13th Street

» Orchard Park, 66th Street: north of Hartman Avenue

» F Street football field, F Street east of 56th Street: parking lot east of field

» Ta-Ha-Zouka Park, 20801 Elkhorn Drive: parking lot behind the Chamber of Commerce

» Kelly West Park, 87th Street and Park View Boulevard

» Chalco Hills Recreation Area: south parking lot of Wehrspann Lake Wildlife Management Area, south of Highway 370, between Interstate 80 and 168th Street

» Bellevue Old Sarpy County Landfill, 8902 Cedar Island Road

» Papillion Senior Center, 1001 Limerick Road

» Papio Bay Aquatic Park parking lot, 815 E. Halleck St.

» Walnut Creek Connector Trail, Schram Road and Creek Side Drive (west of 96th Street)

» La Vista Sports Complex, 66th Street, two blocks south of Harrison Street

» Ralston, Pierson/Orval Ballfields, Woodlawn Avenue and Park Drive

» Hughes Mulch Products, 3211

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Trees: Can be recycled into compost

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Keystone Drive. This site is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday only.

Volunteers from the Rotary Clubs of Omaha and Douglas-Sarpy Master Gardeners will help unload at Tranquility Park and the F Street football field on Saturday and Sunday, and Jan. 6 and 7, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

For more information, visit wasteline.org/rcy_xmas.htm.

Hauling your tree to a drop-off point is not your only option. Starting today, Omaha-area Boy Scouts will conduct their 19th annual Christmas tree pickup drive. Scouts and adult volunteers will come to your home, pick up your tree and take it to a drop-off point.

The service is available in much of Omaha, Ralston, La Vista, Papillion, Bellevue, Gretna, Elkhorn and Bennington west of 42nd Street. Those interested must place a reservation at least 24

hours in advance by going to www.scouting4trees.org or by calling 402-965-1458.

The Scouts will pick up trees today, Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Jan. 6, 7 and 13. The trees will be collected on those dates from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

The recycled trees are ground into Oma-Gro compost, said Jim Theiler, assistant director of Omaha Public Works. "If we can divert those from the landfill and use them for something, that's a benefit."

If you wish to simply throw out your tree, you can leave it with your trash. The branches need to be bundled and the trunk needs to be cut down to chunks of 4 feet or less. Instead of being recycled, it will be hauled to the landfill, said Lisa Disbrow, spokeswoman for Waste Management of Omaha, which collects residential trash in the city.

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THIS WEEKEND

- Lincoln Public Schools' winter break starts Saturday, continues through Jan. 7.
- Last day of Treetop Toys holiday shopping 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at Lincoln Children's Zoo, 1222 S. 27th St. Open for holiday shopping and membership purchases. Items up to 75% off.
- Living Nativity 6 to 8 p.m. Saturday at Trinity United Methodist Church, 7130 Kentwell Lane. Experience what the first Christmas may have been like while you look at Christmas lights. Info.: maureen@trinitylincoln.org.
- Christmas Eve morning service 10 a.m. Sunday at Unitarian Church of Lincoln, 6300 A St. Special music, telling the story of Jesus' birth, and honoring the beginning of Chanukah. Worship leader: Oscar Sinclair, worship associate: Barb Brant, music led by Julie Cross.
- St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 8550 Pioneers Blvd., to offer four Christmas Eve services Sunday, each with music and closing with candlelight. Services at 9 a.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m., and 7 p.m. More info.: www.stmarks.org/christmas-2017
- First-Plymouth Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, 20th & D streets, plans 10 worship services this Christmas Eve on Sun-

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- day: 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., 11 a.m., 11:59 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 3 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m. 9 p.m., and 11 p.m.
- Christ Lutheran Christmas Eve services Sunday at Christ Lutheran Church, 4325 Sumner St.: 3 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. — family service, perfect for younger children; 6 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. — Lessons and Carols; 9 p.m. — Room211 Candlelight; 11 p.m. Candlelight.
- Three Christmas Eve services Sunday at Christ United Methodist Church, 4530 A St.: 4 p.m. — designed for children and young families with handwritten and illustrated Christmas story; 7 p.m. — traditional candlelight service; 11 p.m. — candlelight service with Holy Communion. More info. at christumclinc.org/christmaseve

- Christmas Eve potluck supper 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday at Fraternal Order of Eagles — Lincoln Auxiliary 147, 500 West Industrial Lake Drive.
- Candlelight Christmas Eve Communion services 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday at First United Methodist Church, 2723 N. 50th St., followed at 11 p.m. by Lessons and Carols using the pattern of King's College in Cambridge, England.
- Christmas Eve services 5 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Sunday at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 2325 S. 24th St. Christmas Day service 9 a.m. Monday.
- Room211 South candlelight service 6:30 p.m. Sunday at Lincoln Christian School, 5801 S. 84th St. (Room211 South is a ministry of Christ Lutheran Church.)
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service & Communion, 7 p.m. Sunday at Bethany Christian Church, 1645 N. Cotner Blvd.

MONDAY

- Merry Christmas!
- Christ Lutheran Christmas worship service 9:30 a.m. at Christ Lutheran Church, 4325 Sumner St. At the same time, Room211 will meet to go Christmas caroling in nursing homes throughout the community.

TUESDAY

- Lincoln Sunrise Kiwanis Club meeting 6:30 a.m. in the Flanagan Room at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, 5401 South St.
- American Red Cross Bloodmobile visit, noon to 6 p.m. at American Red Cross Capital City Chapter, 220 Oakcreek Drive. Appointment: 1-800-733-2767.
- Due to the Christmas holiday, Lincoln Rotary Club #14 will not meet Dec. 26. The club's weekly noon luncheon meeting schedule resumes Jan. 2 at The Nebraska Club, 20th floor of US Bank, 12th and M streets.
- Lincoln Southeast Kiwanis Club noon luncheon meeting at The Egg and I, 70th and A streets, Clock Tower Shopping Center.
- Capital City Kiwanis Club weekly dinner meeting 6 p.m. at the Cotner Center, 1540 N. Cotner Blvd.
- Free give-away 6 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday at Calvary United Methodist Church, South 11th and Garfield streets. Free clothing (all sizes) and household items. No income eligibility requirements.
- Lincoln Bethany Lions Club dinner 6 p.m. at Golden Corral Restaurant, 3940 N. 27th St., followed by 7 p.m. meeting.
- Lincoln Evening Optimist Club meets at 6:30 p.m. at Taylor Meadows Office Building, 70th & Teton Dr.

- Dance to the music of the C.J. Honnor Quartet, 7 to 9 p.m. at Auld Pavilion in Antelope Park, 3140 Sumner St. Ballroom and other varieties of dance.
- Lincoln Continentals men's a cappella chorus weekly rehearsal, 7 to 9 p.m. at Northeast United Church of Christ Social Hall, 6200 Adams St. New singers, guests welcome.
- Lincoln Chorus weekly rehearsal, 7 to 9 p.m. at Vine Congregational UCC, 1800 Twin Ridge Rd.

WEDNESDAY

- Lincoln Sunrise Optimist Club breakfast meeting 7 a.m. at Perkins, 48th & O streets.
- Lincoln Gateway Sertoma Club breakfast meeting 7:30 a.m. at Tabitha, 48th and J streets. Guest speaker: Wendy Baker, Lincoln-Lancaster County United Way.
- Lincoln Northeast Kiwanis Club weekly noon luncheon meeting at Golden Corral, 3940 N. 27th St.
- SouthPointe Kiwanis Club noon luncheon meeting at Williamsburg Hy-Vee, 40th & Duxhall Dr.
- Holiday break: Lincoln East Rotary Club will not hold a noon luncheon meeting Dec. 27 at Valentino's Grand Italian Buffet, 70th & Van Dorn. Meetings resume Jan. 3, 2018 with Katie Murtha, representing Lincoln City Libraries/Heritage Room Authors.
- South Gate United Methodist Church, 3500 Pioneers Blvd., hosts special worship service on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. Come as you are from work and participate in a short, meaningful service with Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede. A midweek opportunity for a brief quiet time. All are welcome. More info: (402) 489-1641.
- Free support group for people who have amputations to meet from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in Lancaster Room at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, 5401 South St. Info.: Julie, (402) 483-9439.

THURSDAY

- Lincoln Northeast Sertoma Club breakfast meeting 7 a.m. in Hy-Vee Club Room, 5020 O St.
- Lincoln Center Sertoma Club breakfast meeting 7 a.m. at The Cornhusker, a Marriott hotel, 333 S. 13th St.
- Yoga classes led by a certified yoga instructor 9:30 a.m. every Thursday at Trinity United Methodist Church, 7130 Kentwell Lane. Bring a mat. Free-will donation.
- Cornhusker Kiwanis Club weekly luncheon meeting 11:30 a.m. at The Venue Restaurant, South 70th & Pioneers Blvd. Info.: www.cornhuskerkiwanis.org
- SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training) meets at 6:30 p.m. at

Parallels, 4706 S. 48th St. Free support group for people who have any addictive behavior.

- Husker women's basketball team plays host to Ohio State, 7 p.m. at Pinnacle Bank Arena. Info. at www.PinnacleBankArena.com

FRIDAY

- American Red Cross Bloodmobile visit, noon to 6 p.m. at Chick-fil-A Lincoln SouthPointe Pavilions, 6810 S. 27th St. Appointment: call 1-800-733-2767.
- Lincoln Center Kiwanis Club weekly noon luncheon meeting on 20th floor of U.S. Bank, 13th and M streets. Program: club business.
- Lincoln South Rotary Club weekly noon luncheon at The Venue Restaurant, 70th & Pioneers Blvd. Guest speaker: Jason Varga, Human Services Federation executive director.
- FirstTier Toastmasters Club meets noon to 1 p.m. at Saint Paul United Methodist Church, 12th and M streets. For more information, visit <http://5949.toastmastersclubs.org>
- Husker men's basketball team plays host to Stetson, 7 p.m. at Pinnacle Bank Arena. Info. at www.PinnacleBankArena.com
- Music by High Country from 7:30 to 11 p.m. at Fraternal Order of Eagles — Lincoln Auxiliary 147, 500 West Industrial Lake Drive. Food (tuna casserole) served from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

NEXT WEEKEND

- "Last Blast!" concert 8 p.m. Sunday (Dec. 31) at First-Plymouth Church, 20th and D streets, preceded by 6:30 p.m. reception with champagne and appetizers to celebrate 40 years of The Plymouth Brass. Anniversary celebration tickets \$15; concert tickets \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors, \$10 for students. Call (402) 476-9933 or abendmusik.org

COMING SOON

- Erth's Dinosaur Zoo LIVE 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 8, 2018, at the Lied Center for the Performing Arts, 301 N. 12th St. Travel back 65 million years as Erth's Dinosaur Zoo LIVE guides your family on a breathtaking tour through prehistoric Australia. Tickets at the Lied Center box office. Appropriate for ages 5 and above.
- "The Sound of Music," coming to the Lied Center stage, 301 N. 12th St., for five performances Jan. 12-14. The spirited, romantic and beloved musical story of Maria and the von Trapp family returns to the stage. Tickets at the Lied Center box office.



Rotary Club speaker praises Nebraska's public school system

■ McGowan: State has diminished need for charter schools

by Travis Blase

Nebraska Public School Advantage representative Kyle McGowan touted the importance of the state's public school system last week in Aurora, also touching on a hot-button issue involving the talk of charter schools coming to Nebraska.

Speaking to the Aurora Rotary Club Dec. 13, McGowan said his organization's main objective is to showcase compelling stories and extraordinary work happening in Nebraska's public schools.

"Our goal is to truly find great things that are going on in communities in Nebraska," he began. "I hope that you realize that Aurora has a tremendous reputation as a community and school in the state. I think they work together so you really can't have one without the other."

McGowan, a former school superintendent at Crete who is now retired, noted that Nebraska currently ranks sixth in the nation in education, according to a report published by U.S. News and

World Report.

"In Nebraska we have a unique educational system that is rated very high in the country," McGowan added. "It's a state requirement to educate kids and Nebraska is always in the top."

The NPSA rep then went into graduation rates for the state, which are also some of the highest in the country. McGowan specifically cited Aurora, where 99 percent of students end up graduating, in comparison to other schools like Crete where the graduation rate is around 88 percent. Yet, nationwide the average graduation rate is around 77 percent.

The conversation then led into charter schools, an issue that has been on McGowan's radar for some time. With Nebraska being one of seven states not allowing charter schools, McGowan explained what they are.

"Charter schools are different than faith-based schools and private schools," he said. "The difference between a charter school and parochial schools, for

instance, is that charter schools take public money to fund. They are called charter because you create a charter, a framework in which you're allowed to come to the school. So they don't necessarily take everyone that knocks on the door."

While the issue of charter schools has positives and negatives in states where the public education system is not as successful, McGowan focused on the issue of funding and how there are plenty of choices within the entirety of Nebraska's school system.

"Nebraska is 49th in the nation to contributing state money to local schools," McGowan added. "That's why your property taxes that go to schools are so high is because we make the local people pay for them. To create another system that would take an already limited amount of money out of a very limited pool to create a charter school seems unreasonable. My concern if you use public money is that everyone in the public has to be eligible for it. If you choose something

else then you have to be willing to pay for that choice."

With the state using so much property tax to pay for schools, McGowan and his organization worry where the other public funding would come from if charter schools became a popular concept in Nebraska.

"The things that we do in Nebraska that we take for granted whether it's the early childhood programs, the after-school programs, the dual college-credit classes, all of those things you offer in Aurora aren't necessarily offered in other states," he said.

He reminded the group that even though some states have good charter school systems, they came about due to a poor overall educational system. And with Nebraska sitting at the top of that list, McGowan doesn't see the need to incorporate an extra tier of schools.

For more information on McGowan and his organization go to nebraska-advantage.org.



News-Register/Kurt Johnson

Salvation Army bell ringers

Volunteers from several different local organizations took turns ringing the Salvation Army bell this holiday season just outside the Aurora Mall. On Friday evening, it was the Aurora Rotary Club's turn. Pictured are Rotarians Kara Ronnau (center) and Diane Keller, along with Ronnau's son, Dylan.