

# The Register-Mail

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## Galesburg residents take part in Festival of Nativities

By Mitch Prentice / The Register-Mail

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GALESBURG — The Peoria Community Festival of Nativities will return for its second year Dec. 1 to 3. Galesburg resident Barbara Wynkoop will be making her second appearance at the event, where she will display 15 sets of Nativity pieces.

Wynkoop's first Nativity event was more than 10 years ago in Macomb, where her daughter lives. She loved seeing all of the different arrangements and was happy to share hers as well. She didn't have a chance to do this sort of event again until last year, when Peoria put on its first Festival of Nativities.

"I didn't have quite as many originally," Wynkoop said. "When I heard about this event last year, I thought it was just wonderful."

At the festival, more than 500 separate scenes will be on display, all by various members of the religious branches hosting the event. It is fully volunteer-based and will see performances by music groups and a live nativity scene.

Wynkoop has a vast array of Nativity pieces, including some resembling cast gold and others made of wood for children to play with. She recalls setting these wooden figures up for her grandchildren to play with during visits.

She explained that the reason these pieces resonate so strongly with her is the connection they have to her faith. She sees the scenes as a resemblance to the true nature of her religion and is happy to share these small nativities with others at this grand event. To Wynkoop, these nativity scenes mark the true spirit of the holiday season. Of course, she also sees the beauty and craftsmanship of the pieces to be a selling point.

"These pieces are priceless to me," Wynkoop said. "I enjoy being able to share everything that I have collected."

Galesburg resident Rhonda Brady is the festival committee member for Galesburg and Monmouth. She is part of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one of the churches sponsoring the event. She was part of last year's event as well and plans to continue as a committee member.

Brady described the festival as "mind-boggling and intricate," stating that it features something for all ages. It's also an excellent introduction to the season of Christmas, she adds.

As a committee member, Brady is in charge of recruiting volunteers, setting up and cleaning up the event space and helping to publicize the event.

"I don't believe there is anything like this in the western Illinois area, especially for free," Brady said.

Among the many activities taking place at the festival, Brady says her favorite is the scavenger hunt. Though aimed at the kids, it's an event for anyone to take part in. She says it highlights the unique qualities of the festival, as it forces people to finely search through every display to find small intricacies within.

"We tend to spend much of our time moving through things quickly," Brady said. "But when you stop and really look, it turns the light bulb on and makes you think, 'Wow, this is different!'"

The event will be hosted at 3700 W. Reservoir Blvd. in Peoria starting Dec. 1 and continuing through Dec. 3. The events on Friday and Saturday last from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., while the final event Sunday runs from noon to 6 p.m. There will be new music and nativity actors every day. Admission to the event is free.

For more information, visit www.CommunityFestivalofNativities.com, email peorianativities@gmail.com or call (309) 240-8123.