

MADE BY THE **PASSIONATE** CRCC COMMUNITY



THE CEDAR RIDGE

QUARTERLY

FALL 2022

A LOOK BACK ON THE LAST QUARTER

Did the camera catch
your good side?
Check out pics from
our recent events.

SPENDING AT CEDAR RIDGE: WHERE DOES IT ALL GO?!

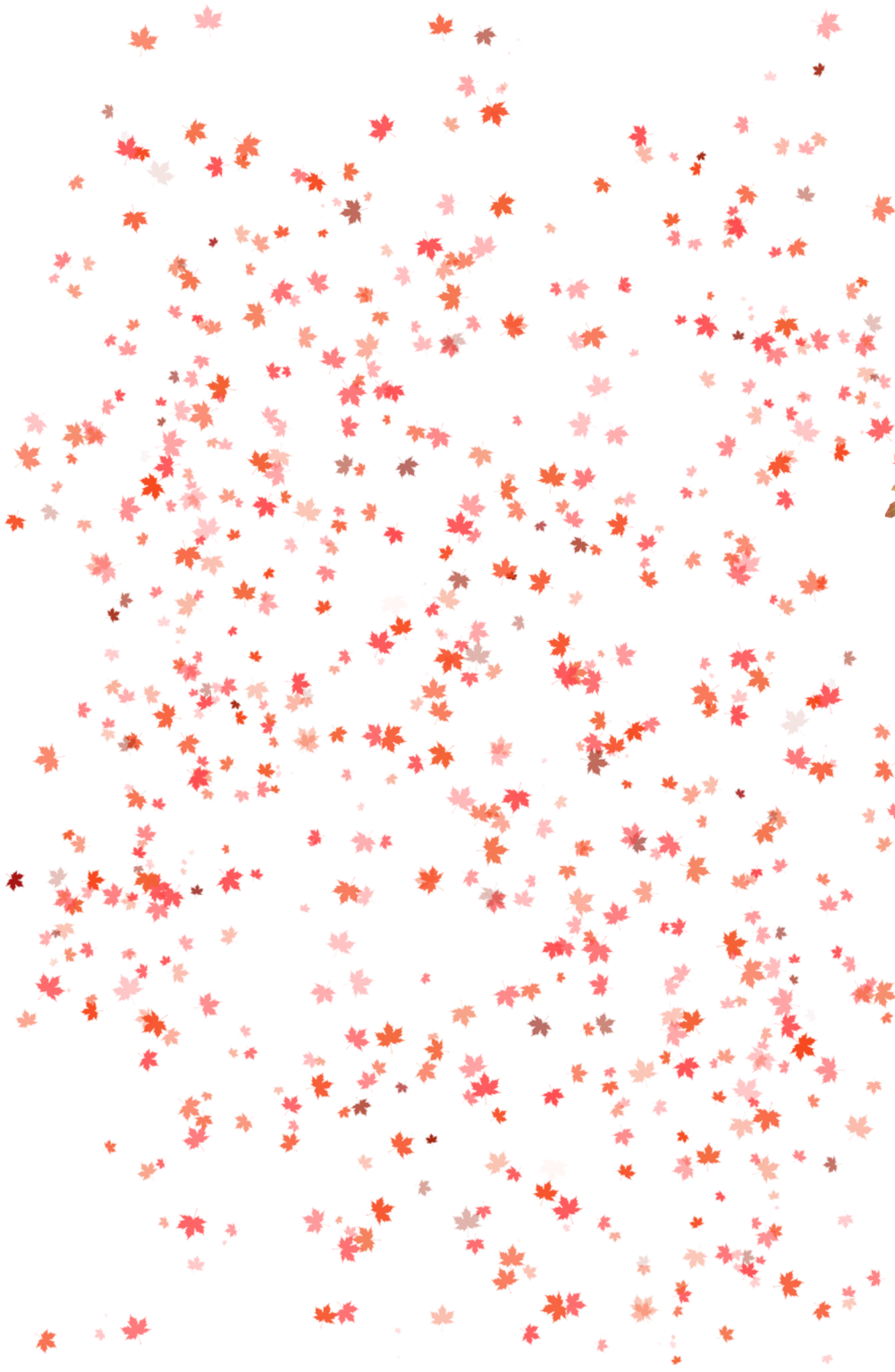
All you wanted to know
about our finances, but
were afraid to ask.

UPDATES FROM NEAR AND FAR

Dishing the latest on
Guatemala, local
schools, and the farm.

...AND SO MUCH MORE INSIDE THIS ISSUE!





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FROM THE CASTLE

**WRAPPING UP THE
FARMING SEASON**

GUAT'S UP?

MATTHEW'S DESK



MATTHEW DYER
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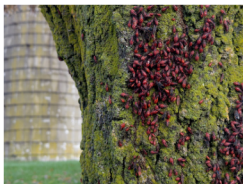
Fall is a beautiful time of year, and so rich in color. The changing trees seem to imbue the whole atmosphere with a glowing warmth of soft red and orange. And we have so many other colors too, punctuating the landscape with light. Goldenrod of all kinds swaying and shining in the sun. The varied purples of thistles, iron weed, and chicory. Dazzling white fall asters and boneset. And brilliant scarlet berries of holly and viburnum. On even just a brief saunter across our property you can't miss this kaleidoscope of color—at times it's breathtaking!

And yet within this vibrancy, fall is also a time of decay, descent and even death. Leaves are falling, to reveal skeletal branches. Flowers are surrendering and fading. There's a clinging chill in the morning that reminds us winter is coming. But all this is part of a much bigger, even more beautiful rhythm of life—the ebb and flow of nature, as God breathes in and out, and we flow in its cadence. The falling leaves nourish the soil ready for a new season of growth after the peace of winter. Flowers fade only after their sustained labor of love has yielded thousands of seeds that blow, billow and float through the air or fruits that are eaten by hungry creatures. These are all the beginnings of new life, patiently waiting for the next moment to come, never giving up hope.

Perhaps this is why fall is also a time of thankful celebration—we've just celebrated our farm's harvest with our local community, and we look forward to Thanksgiving and the beginning of the holidays. It's a time of year when we reflect on life with gratefulness, and in this fall edition of our newsletter, you'll be able to read about all kinds of incredible things God has been doing in and through our community over the past year. Things for which we can all be so thankful!

This fall I want to thank you for being such a committed and loving participant in our community. You are the falling leaves that nourish the soil of our life together through the sacrifice of your giving, serving, and willingness to be compassionately present. You are the flowers that experience times of vibrancy and times of decline but remain faithful throughout both. You are the seeds that will yet bear fruit we've not even begun to imagine.

Sometimes, both in our personal lives and in our life together as a community, it can be hard to see growth, progress, or movement. But over time, with each beat of the rhythm of God, with each cycle of faithfulness, there's a resonance that can't be resisted. We can each step back and see that we really are growing as people—becoming more human, more loving, more just, and more like Jesus. And as a community at moments like this we can take stock and celebrate who we are and what we do—our atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion, our beautiful property, our farm, our partnership with our friends in Ipala, the times we celebrate life together with food and drink, the times we weep together in our struggles, the ways we serve our local public schools, our commitment to justice, our solar farm, our openness to both faith and doubt and our willingness to embrace the beautiful, mysterious, transcendent, wonder of God as we follow Jesus together.





Annual Plan

September 2022 – August 2023

Our goal for this coming year is two-fold: to regroup and strengthen our sense of community and belonging, and to reignite our individual and collective passion to follow Jesus.

We aim to achieve this goal by (i) engaging in a discernment process, (ii) developing increasingly meaningful and relevant Sunday morning services for all age groups, (iii) creating more opportunities for personal interconnection, particularly on Sundays, and (iv) strengthening knowledge, passion and commitment around justice issues.

You can read more about our plan for the year at www.cccc.org/our-plans.

INVESTING IN OUR VISION



Cedar Ridge is an incredibly generous community. Families and individuals at Cedar Ridge donated 80% of the income we brought in last year. We give to finance the vision to which we are committed; and we give as an expression of our vision—demonstrating good stewardship, generosity, service, and discipleship. Below is a summary of how we spent our income last year, and our plan for spending in the coming year.

Over the last 12 months, our operating expenses totaled \$789,886. This was in addition to capital expenses of \$49,115. Our budget goal for September 2022–August 2023 is to finance the annual plan priorities detailed below through community donations of \$721,115, and rental income and grants amounting to \$170,189, for a total operating budget of \$891,304.

Worship Services

*FY23 Budget \$112,549**

Although COVID is clearly here to stay, high vaccination rates within our community and in the region as a whole have enabled us to resume all our in-person activities with additional safety precautions in place. Gathering together as a diverse community is an essential way we experience more of God, and in the coming year we will focus more on incorporating interactivity into Sunday services through community storytelling, experiential worship and contemplative space, as well nurturing relationships through a variety of social activities.

*The figures quoted include salaries of staff members who devote time to the respective ministry areas.

Spending in FY22 \$91,920

Over the last year, we explored the highs and lows of life together through the series "When Everything Seems Broken" and "A Few of Our Favorite Things," looked at the stories behind some beloved Christmas carols, took a deep dive into the Gospel of Luke, went on a Lenten journey in stones, and engaged with the elements of earth, wind, fire and water. We gathered together for outdoor services to celebrate Harvest, Easter and Earth Day, and encouraged in-person attendance through after-service social events, while continuing to remain accessible via zoom.

Children and Youth

FY23 Budget \$64,315

Our children and youth leaders encourage and challenge our students to follow Jesus passionately and help make the world a better place, while welcoming doubts, questions, and struggles. This year we will focus on strengthening community and friendship for parents and children, as well as better integrating youth into the vision of our church.

Spending in FY22 \$53,649

This last year saw a welcome return to in-person activities for children and youth. Our preschoolers continued to use our tailor-made curriculum while elementary children engaged with topics such as what is the Bible and why is it important, stories from Luke and Acts, and a Lenten journey in stones. Youth had a laser tag night, participated in Service Days, and led a "God in the Movies" message on the movie "Moana."

Small Groups

FY23 Budget \$10,085

Small groups provide a place to experience growth, community and servanthood. During the coming year, short-term discussion groups will be held to allow people to connect with others, possibly also providing an on-ramp to longer-term groups. Existing groups will continue to focus on encouraging and supporting members, as well as celebrating life together in safe and appropriate ways.

Spending in FY22 \$8,879

Discipleship groups and other small groups—such as the Caring for Kids from Hard Places group, Place of Rest for People of Color, and book study group—continued to meet (mainly virtually) throughout the year, providing encouragement, prayer, and practical support to Cedar Ridge members and attenders.

Prayer and Healing

FY23 Budget \$87,937

Through prayer, we experience the loving presence of God, which enables us to engage more healthily in the challenges, as well as the beauty of everyday life. We respond to the pain and suffering of both church members and our extended community through prayer, counseling, and practical support. Throughout the year, we will hold prayer practice evenings, quiet days and other contemplative events, and we will continue to promote prayer as an integral part of discipleship for people of all ages. Pastoral staff will lead a prayerful discernment process about the way ahead, drawing on input from Cedar Ridge members and attenders.

Spending in FY22 \$77,802

We experienced God’s presence together through monthly outdoor prayer practice evenings, emotional support groups led by trained counselors, online Advent meditations, contemplative Lenten services, and workshops on creative prayerful practices. In addition, prayer practices were integrated into Sunday services and promoted through our small groups. We responded to the pain and suffering of both church members and our extended community virtually and in person through prayer, counseling, and practical support. \$4,400 in funds designated for COVID assistance supported community members experiencing particular financial hardship.



Social Justice

FY23 Budget \$19,967

We will continue to develop activities related to racial and economic justice in public education and criminal justice reform, and will hold Churchwide Days of Service with a focus on the underlying justice issues that perpetuate need. The racial justice team will host a series of events to strengthen our knowledge, passion and commitment to racial justice issues. And we will continue to seek out ways to support Greencastle Elementary, as well as Kemp Mill and/or other nearby schools requesting our assistance.

Spending in FY22 \$21,602

Achievements included delivery of over \$7,000 worth of food and winter clothing to Greencastle families in need; \$2,500 in gift cards to the staff of Greencastle Elementary; weekly farm food deliveries in partnership with Manna Food Center, Linkages to Learning, and Community Food Rescue; a voting guide for the Maryland primary election; an MLK, Jr. Day "Reflection" focused on Dr. King's "Give us the Ballot" speech; and numerous projects during our Churchwide Days of Service.

Farm

FY23 Budget \$24,347

The farm is a visible demonstration of our commitment to economic justice, and a place we can experience the mystery and beauty of God in nature, both individually and as a community serving together. We will continue our focus on promoting food justice issues through the farm and on celebrating the harvest. We will also continue to partner with Manna Food Center and Linkages to Learning to address food justice issues in our locality. In addition, we will explore the possibility of becoming a site for Care Farming (therapeutic farming for people with learning disabilities).



Spending in FY22 \$24,550

During the 2022 farming season, we grew, harvested and delivered over 3,400 lbs of fresh produce to hungry neighbors. In addition, we hosted multiple school groups, scouts, and community groups, who learned about food security issues in Montgomery County before hiking the property on an environment-themed nature walk. We also welcomed visitors through a spring planting day (hosted by the Easter Bunny), and Earth Day Celebration; and we enjoyed community together through monthly farm events including sangria nights and a Guatemala-themed farm night.

Guatemala

FY23 Budget \$49,901

In the coming year, we will adopt a "challenge group" approach to promote a more in-depth and sustained engagement for justice in Ipala, which may include a visit to Guatemala for some group members. We will apply our justice-oriented assessment tool for Cedar Ridge-funded projects as we continue to support local empowerment, particularly through education.

Spending in FY22 \$53,186

This past year, we provided 54 scholarships to secondary school youth, contributed to a health fund that assists with medical needs, funded the installation of sinks to promote handwashing at a preschool, and began installing solar panels to power 20 low-income homes. Designated funding also supported flood relief and prevention efforts. In July, three members of the Guatemala team traveled to Ipala to strategize about priority needs. Contact with our partners was maintained throughout the year through video and phone calls.

Local outreach

FY23 Budget \$70,955

We will continue to organize safe and creative outreach activities, taking advantage of higher vaccination rates and the spaciousness of our property and facilities. This will include a full-scale Harvest Festival, movie nights with activities and refreshments, a largely-outdoor Christmas event, a Creative Cup Coffeehouse and other social events—which we will promote through roadside signage and direct mailings. We will also participate in community festivals such as Burtonsville Day.

Spending in FY22 \$64,417

After a year’s hiatus, we were pleased to be able to host our regular activities in a modified form to ensure everyone’s safety. We held a Pumpkin Patch (a scaled-back version of the Harvest Festival) that was well attended and appreciated by our community despite a last-minute weather-related postponement. We also hosted two outdoor movie nights with popcorn and hot chocolate, Advent at the Barn with Santa and his elves, and an all-ages Creative Open House.

Facilities

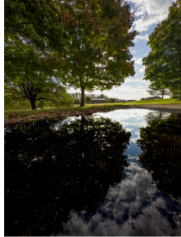
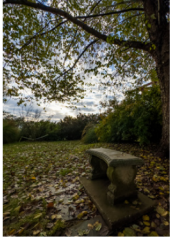
FY23 Budget \$417,353

We will continue to rent out our facilities in ways that comply with state and county regulations, optimize rental income, and support our local community. We will invest in necessary upgrades, such as the aging HVAC system, and will ensure a high standard of routine maintenance. We will continue to use our beautiful 63-acre property to host large and small community gatherings. Using funding bequeathed to Cedar Ridge, we will begin to fulfill our commitment to the County to restore the historic farmhouse as a multipurpose meeting space.

Spending in FY22 \$393,882

In June 2022, the 8-acre, 2MW community solar farm constructed on our property became operational, delivering energy to 350 families, 30 percent of whom live on low to moderate income. Rental income increased significantly over the last financial year due to the solar farm as well as an additional church renter. Also during the year, we landscaped around the church building, constructed a playground fence, and established a native pollinator garden. Our well-maintained property continued to provide a peaceful refuge for many people within our church community and beyond.

THE QUARTERLY



EVENTS ROUND UP



SUMMER SUNDAYS

Our series of social events following the Sunday service wrapped up with a cook-out in August and a potluck picnic in September.



MINISTRY FAIR

In September, we hosted our annual Ministry Fair, highlighting the many areas we are engage in as a community.



BURTONSVILLE DAY

We threw candy, picked up trash, and welcomed people to our booth.



MOVIE NIGHT

We watched "The Bad Guys," made s'mores, ate freshly popped corn and drank hot chocolate. Yum!



HARVEST FESTIVAL

Approximately 650 people came out to celebrate our farm harvest and to enjoy the beautiful fall weather that graced our rain-delayed Harvest Festival.





DAY OF SERVICE

We weeded school gardens and planted bulbs, picked up trash in nearby parks, prepared the farm for winter, made Thanksgiving cards for nursing home residents and meals for Shepherd's Table, and carried out essential maintenance on the property.



MY FIRST YEAR ON THE BOARD



NADINE SMITH

When I was first approached to be on the Cedar Ridge Board, I was surprised since I had been at Cedar Ridge for 19 years, maintaining a very low profile, and didn't think anyone knew me. I had been involved with another church years prior, but was taking a break from being active. At the time I was approached, I wasn't a church member, which disqualified me; however, I immediately took the Journey course hoping this would qualify me in the future.

During the intervening time, I made more effort to be visible in the church so people would know me. A couple of years later I was nominated and elected as a Board member. I didn't have much of an idea what being a Board member at Cedar Ridge involved, but was flattered to be asked. I knew there was a Treasurer, Chair, and Secretary, but wasn't sure what was done by other members.

Now that I've been on the Board for a year, I have a much better idea of how it works! We meet monthly, which used to be on zoom, but has lately been in-person. There is an agenda for each meeting, and everything is run in accordance with Robert's Rules, so it's very official. That said, the meetings can also be fun when snacks are brought, and different members inject humor into the meeting. Everyone is very respectful and congenial, and a big bonus is getting to know the other Board members who I barely knew.

The Chair plays a vital role on the Board in terms of managing everything—deciding on the agenda, interacting with the Pastor, running the meetings, setting goals/objectives & providing leadership. The Secretary also has an important & difficult job of capturing everything discussed at meetings and presenting the minutes for approval within a few days. The Treasurer is also a key member who is charged with presenting many charts showing the progression of assets/debt from month-to-month as well as from year-to-year, which captures where we are financially. The rest of the Board members don't have a specific title; however most still volunteer for important jobs, like working on the buildings & grounds maintenance, replacement of old equipment, getting estimates & bargaining on new work to be done.

Everyone contributes by showing up, listening, and giving their opinion/voting after a discussion about the current topic. I couldn't believe how many topics are discussed at Board meetings! Of course, everything having to do with money is discussed. The ongoing maintenance of our buildings & grounds is always on the agenda. There is an unbelievable number of things that need to be discussed in maintaining Cedar Ridge—things I took for granted or just never thought about because it's handled by the Board & pastors. It's a great deal of responsibility and involves a lot of reporting, communications & coming up with well thought out, novel solutions & ideas when discussing difficult subjects. Besides holding Board meetings, we also communicate through a great number of emails that necessitate timely responses when decisions have to be made.

I find it a privilege and an honor to be a member of the CRCC Board. I enjoy it immensely, find it very rewarding, and hope I'm contributing something to the well-being of this community.



FROM THE CASTLE



RUTH CAMPBELL
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Over the last few months we have continued to deepen our relationship with the staff and families at Greencastle Elementary School. (*"The Castle ~ Home of the Noble Knights! Where Everyone is Respectful, Responsible, and Ready to Learn!"*).

On August 23, we were delighted to welcome onto our property Linkages-to-Learning (L2L) families from Greencastle and Montgomery Knolls. Our 50 guests spent the day harvesting farm produce to take home, eating pizza and ice cream, then hiking our bi-lingual natural trail. In the late afternoon, the kids blew bubbles and played in splash pools while we adults chatted and sipped Afghan chai under the shade of the trees. We all hope this will be the first of many visits!

A change in demographics (including dietary restrictions and a rise in homelessness) has led to a shift in the way L2L is supporting families' food needs. In place of "food in backpack" kits, we are now collecting the food pantry items listed on our website. Greencastle staff and families are so appreciative of our service projects, winter clothing drives, food deliveries and hospitality. Thank you Cedar Ridge for all your kind generosity!



WRAPPING UP THE FARMING SEASON

We have wrapped up another year: 42 workdays were held. Over 1,000 hours of volunteer labor were logged. Four school groups and three community groups were hosted. Almost 3,500 lbs of fresh produce were grown, harvested and delivered to hungry neighbors. And winter cover crops were sown on 9,000 square feet—ready to start all over again next spring.

But numbers alone do not tell the story of the farm. More significant yet are the heartfelt conversations held while weeding carrots. Earnest students learning how to fertilize squash plants. Visitors from Haiti excited to see the mini-forest of okra plants. Kids competing to pull the biggest radish. And youth squealing and running for water after sampling the hot peppers. The beauty of the butterflies swarming round the zinnias as the sun sinks beneath the horizon. The camaraderie of running for shelter as the storm clouds burst. An overwhelming sense of gratitude for the privilege of land, food, and community. These things can't be measured: only experienced.

Thank you to the incredibly faithful farm team! Thank you to everyone who came out to help. Come and join us next year. (It's only five months until our next planting day!)



GUAT'S UP?

LET THERE BE LIGHTS



BRYAN PETERSON

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On June 27, 2022, Cedar Ridge's community solar farm became operational, harnessing energy from the sun and transferring it to BGE customers around the region, thirty percent of whom are low- to moderate-income families. But Maryland residents aren't the only ones benefiting from Cedar Ridge's commitment to environmental and economic justice. Over 3000 miles away, twenty families in Ipala, Guatemala are receiving solar panels that are bringing electricity into their homes for the first time.

One such family is the Jacinto Mejia family. Thirteen people, mostly children, live together on the outskirts of their mountainous village called el Rosario. They had no access to electricity, so they used candles, battery-operated lanterns and wooden torch-like devices to provide some illumination to their homes after 6pm (which is when it gets dark year-round). They would have to walk into the center of town and pay people to charge their cell phones, which are crucial devices for communication and for remote studies during COVID.



But that all changed on July 31, 2022. On that Sunday, they became the first recipient of 30-watt rooftop solar panels provided with funding from Cedar Ridge’s designated Guatemala fund. Four people from our Guatemala Team (Deb Frew, Sal Chairez, Vernon Archer and Bryan Peterson) were honored to be present that evening as the lights were switched on. Mom expressed thanks to God for touching the hearts of ACIDHER and Cedar Ridge, while the girls read their schoolbooks under one of the three light bulbs powered by the panels. A phone charger was installed in their cinder-block home as well. The family will now have at least seven hours of electricity each day. While they won’t be able to power a big-screen tv or a refrigerator, the introduction of electricity is a game-changer for this hard-working family.

While the alignment with Cedar Ridge’s solar project seems obvious, it was actually our partners in Ipala who initiated this request. Through local leaders, they became aware of 20 families in four rural areas of Ipala who lack electricity. Knowing solar energy has proven effective in their community, ACIDHER made this proposal and we were happy to approve.

This project is a shining example of how, as an expression of following Jesus and loving our neighbors, Cedar Ridge is committed to building friendships and working with our partners to advance economic justice amongst the most vulnerable people in Ipala, Guatemala.



SAVE THE DATE



Enjoy a family-friendly holiday celebration in and around our Barn. We'll have a Santa's grotto, fire pits and s'mores making, festive wagon rides, music, fair-trade gifts, Santa's workshop, and desserts, mulled wine and spiced cider under the tent. Invite friends and family for a wonderful, community-centered start to the holiday season.



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