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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



Media Release

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Fort Leonard Wood Christmas tree-lighting set for Dec. 4

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – FMWR taking Holiday festival to ‘Candyland’

Story and photos by Matt Decker
Leisure/Sports editor

Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation will help area residents get into the spirit of the season Dec. 4, with its annual holiday festival “Adventures in Candyland.” The event is scheduled from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at Joint Services Park.

The theme of this year’s festival is loosely based around the classic children’s board game, and will feature a variety of activities for all ages. Visitors can wander a colorful, treat-lined path, enjoy live music, activities, participate in arts and crafts and more.

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“Every year we try to come up with a different theme to keep the festival fun and different,” said Lorelee Neubeck with the post’s Installation Wide Events Office.

“FMWR comes together and comes up with a theme and a title, and we encourage our sponsors and private organizations to decorate along that theme. Each year, we try to put a new twist on it,” Neubeck said.

As in previous year’s this year’s festival begins with a brief ceremony and the annual lighting of Fort Leonard Wood’s Christmas tree.

“The kickoff starts at 5:30 p.m. at the outside stage, where we will have our School Age Services groups sing, and our 2012 Operation Rising Star winner (Pfc. Marvin Forbes) perform, and Santa Claus will come in on a fire truck,” Neubeck said.

A senior post leader will then conduct the lighting of the tree, which will close the opening ceremonies and begin the evening of activities at the park.

Because the December weather has been frightful in the past, FMWR is placing several of the festival activities in an enclosed tent this year, Neubeck said.

“Our main complaint from patrons last year was how cold it was, so we’ve moved (the activities) inside,” she said. “Once the tree is lit, the main area of events will be open, and Families will be invited to join the fun.”

Activities include games such as a Candy Cane Toss, lollipop decorating, gingerbread activities and a station where kids of all ages can write letters to Santa Claus.

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Jolly Ole' St. Nick will also be on hand for photos at the festival's North Pole Station.

"Families are welcome to have their pictures taken with Santa Claus. They can use their own cameras, and FMWR will be taking photos and putting them on our website for individuals to download, put on their Facebook pages — whatever they want to do with them," Neubeck said.

Outside, on the Candyland Castle Stage, visitors can enjoy performances by the SKIES Dancers, the 399th Army Band and other performers.

If the weather allows, the festival will also have a 37-foot outdoor movie screen, which will feature holiday flicks, and children can enjoy a train ride.

"We will also have a lot of photo opportunities for visitors — cutouts they can put their heads through, a sleigh to sit in and more," Neubeck said.

FMWR Adventures in Candyland is free and open to the public.

FMWR will also judge and announce the winners of its "Operation Christmas Card: Cards to the Community" competition during the festival.

In this case, the "cards" are 4-foot by 8-foot pieces of plywood, decorated with a holiday-themed message to be displayed in the park through the holidays. The contest is free and open to all military and civilian organizations and businesses. Entries must be registered with the FMWR Installation Wide Events Office and set up by Dec. 3, Neubeck said, adding that the original Nov. 19 entry deadline has been extended.

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“Currently, we have about 15 different cards,” she said. “Everyone is invited to register — it’s open to the public, units individuals, organizations, etc.”

For complete rules, visit www.fortleonardwoodmwr.com/specials.php. To register for the contest, call 596.6913.

For more information about the contest, or the Adventures in Candyland festival, visit FMWR online at fortleonardwoodmwr.com.

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Media wanting to cover this event should contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at (573) 563-4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains 80-90,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command’s U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army’s largest Non Commissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.