

County landfill temporarily waives fee for brush disposal

Effective immediately, tipping fees for vegetation and brush will be waived at the Alexander County Landfill. Normal fees go back into effect Monday, November 27, 2017, according to Josh Mitchell, Public Works/Facilities Director.

If you have any questions please contact the Landfill staff at 828-632-9467.

Alex. Landfill holiday closing

The Alexander County Landfill will be closed Thursday, Nov. 23, 2017, for the Thanksgiving holiday.

The Landfill and Convenience Centers will return to a normal schedule Friday, Nov. 24, 2017.



CROP WALK FOR HUNGER TOP 5 FINISHERS NAMED — Alexander County tied up their laces for the 2017 CROP Walk for Hunger with great community involvement. CROP hunger walks transform communities. Those who didn't attend are invited to join in the movement next year and help to change the world. Shown above are the top five finishers, from left to right: Jacob Deal, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 1st place; Dalton Childress, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church, 2nd place; Bryson Abernathy, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church, 3rd place; Pastor Mike Stone, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church, 4th place; Isaac Icard, Bethlehem Baptist Church, 5th place.

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40-Year-Old Bethlehem Star Damaged by EF2 Tornado

By DR. WARREN HOLLAR

The October 23rd EF2 tornado that passed through Bethlehem did extensive damage to the Bethlehem Star. The Bethlehem Star has served as a special identification for the community and its uniqueness as one of the areas named Bethlehem in the United States. During the Christmas season, many native sons and daughters of our community return to their roots to visit family and friends. People still seek homecomings around holidays to remind them of their backgrounds, traditions, and to share early memories with their own children.

The present tornado damage is the third time in the last few years that the star has had wind damage. The 40th Anniversary of the Bethlehem Star Lighting will take place as planned on Saturday December 2nd, 2017. The immediate need is to get the damaged star down, do temporary repairs, and place it back on the pole by December 2. The Bethlehem Community Development Association, which has sponsored the Star Lighting throughout its history, will then develop a design, budget, and financing campaign so a new Bethlehem Star will be in place by Christmas, 2018. BCDA President Chris Parsons, vice president Bud Caywood, and the BCDA Executive Board are working on a Save Our Star process. Caywood is chairing the New Star Project.

Hopefully, replacement plans such as design, costs, and fundraising processes will be in place and announced at the December 2017 Star Lighting. The 2nd Annual Save Our Star "Run the Battlefield" 5K Race/Walk on December 9th at Command Decisions Battlefield in Bethlehem. This race was already planned before the current damage because of the concerns about the condition and future of the current star. Obviously, individuals, clubs, churches, and other groups who have strong historical ties to the operation of this community symbol will be asked to participate in other fundraising activities.

History of the Bethlehem Star

Since 1977, the Star of Bethlehem, NC has been there to greet former residents and non-resident family members during their return home during the month of December. The Bethlehem Star, although a strong religious symbol, is also a greeting to all who choose to visit. The idea for the Star came from a discussion by members of the Bethlehem Community Development Association. Steve Yount, a local banker at the time, had seen a hand painted crèche in a nearby town. Several residents who were businessmen and members of the Bethlehem Community Development Association decided that a manger scene would be a good thing for Bethlehem. Gary Lail, Noah Lail, Steve Yount, and several others decided to bring the topic before a meeting of the BCDA. Yount did the research on the cost of a crèche such as the one in the nearby town. During this BCDA meeting, the idea of paying for a manger scene was expanded to include a star. Gary Lail agreed to raise the money for the project. After much brainstorming, it was decided to have a big star over the manger scene. Hershell Teague, a BCDA officer and a leader at Clayton Marcus Furniture, volunteered to design a big star for Bethlehem.

Thus, the Bethlehem, NC Christmas Star was born. After the electrical and physical design of the Star was in place, it was time to construct the luminary. The actual construction of the first Bethlehem Star was done on the Clayton Marcus Furniture Company grounds. Hershell Teague supervised the construction project with much of the work being done by the maintenance staff of Clayton Marcus including people such as Dulan Annas, Richard Teague, and others. Once the basic construction was complete, Duke Power Company was enlisted to help with the erection. Thanks to the generosity of Duke Power, a tall pole was donated, and a crew completed the wiring and connection of the display. The landmark star was raised on a lot owned by Bethlehem Realty near the intersection of Highway 127 and Rink Dam Road. Over the years, the BCDA and many residents have taken

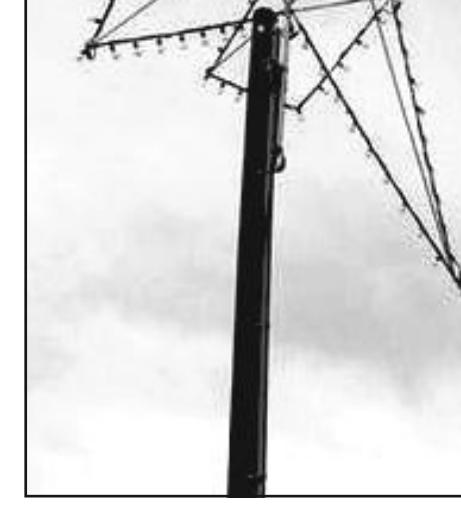
leadership roles in continuing the tradition of our Star.

The first star lighting was held in December 1977. Noah Lail oversaw the development of the program for the first Star Lighting. The Singing Linebangers provided the music for many years for the program. One community resident was given the honor of flipping the electrical switch when the word was given. George Hall gave willingly of his time to cut slabs for bonfires to ward off the December cold. He maintained this responsibility for many years. Other individuals and civic groups have taken on the fire building responsibilities over the years. Local churches provided the live characters and animals for the nativity scene. In recent years, church choirs and individual vocalists have provided the music. The local Boy Scout troop has been responsible for providing hot chocolate. A local minister reads the Christmas Story and musical groups lead the rendition of "O, Beautiful Star of Bethlehem." As the minister said, "A star appeared in the East," the chosen resident flipped the switch for the lighting of the Star.

Several years ago, the Star's electrical wiring became very outdated and in need of repairs and one of the lots that served as a location for the Star was sold for construction of a business. At that time, Mt. Pisgah Lutheran Church agreed to serve as the new location for a new Bethlehem Star. Coincidentally, the USA Weekend newspaper chose Bethlehem, NC to feature as one of the towns with the name Bethlehem in the United States during this transition in 2009.

As many as five thousand residents and visitors have gathered around bonfires under the Star built by individuals and civic groups. They have enjoyed hot chocolate served by scouts, visited a manger scene provided by local churches, and listened to Christmas music performed by both professional and community groups. Several celebrities have attended the Star Lighting. Most have chosen to stay in the background to maintain the spirit of the occasion. Many residents say that the season does not begin until the lighting of the Star. One cannot help but be introspective during the lighting service. Each person who returns home for the holidays does so with either real or imagined schemas of their early years. Hopefully, the community of Bethlehem helps these travelers become re-introduced to their early years. It is a very settling experience to drive North on NC Highway 127 across Lake Hickory to see the Bethlehem Star shining as it welcomes visitors and returning sons and daughters home for the holidays.

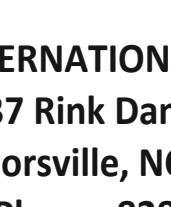
Now that the Star has been severely damaged, it is again time for the community to pool fiscal and human resources to re-build the Star. Hopefully a new star will last another forty years and survive the ravages of inclement weather such as tornadoes and hurricane force winds. More information concerning the process will be forthcoming soon.



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