

Roaming Around Reidsville

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Perhaps it's just the time of the year, but I always get a little sentimental around the holidays. Christmas is the time of giving, and I think about all of the wonderful organizations we have here in Reidsville that give to those less fortunate. My mind goes back to when Reidsville won the All-America City designation in 2008. What helped us cross the finish line was our caring community. The three projects we



highlighted were the Free Clinic of Rockingham County based here in Reidsville, the Reidsville Outreach Center and the Reidsville Teen Center. It was very heartwarming to hear the stories of those who had been helped at each of these facilities.

However, I remember that the judges seemed almost incredulous that a city our size had such beacons of hope for residents not only in Reidsville but throughout Rockingham County. But, by the end of the competition, the judges believed, and we were a 2008 All-America City, one of only a handful selected from across the United States.

Ten years later, and all of these organizations are still around and making a difference in our local community. In fact, the Free Clinic of Rockingham County celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, a testament to the needed work that the organization provides. The Free Clinic's mission is to provide low income, uninsured citizens of Reidsville and Rockingham County access to basic health care. The clinic was the dream of the late Dr. Paul Mabe, who opened the facility after his retirement in 1996 from operating his own practice. Two years later, he would open the Free Clinic.

The Reidsville Outreach Center located on Southwest Market Street in Reidsville continues to provide nutritious food to families and individuals in need. The Center was revamped more than 15 years ago by the late Clara Gunn and others who had both the compassion and willingness to help those in need and the disadvantaged. This past year, in 2017, the Center provided food items to more than 6,500 families or over 13,000 people.

The Reidsville Teen Center, overseen by the City of Reidsville's Parks & Recreation Department, opened in 2004 to provide a safe and positive environment for youth ages 10-16 to learn, recreate and socialize. In recent years, the Teen Center has also undergone a transformation of sorts, focusing more on how it can help teens and their families function in day-to-day living. Examples of such programs have included Career Readiness, STEM classes, cooking classes and soft skills training, to name a few.

For the All-America City competition, spearheaded locally by the Reidsville Chamber of Commerce and the City of Reidsville, we were limited to three worthwhile projects, but when it comes to giving, Reidsville has no shortage of contenders. The Reidsville Soup Kitchen, located at 121 Arlington Street, would have been an equally deserving partner in the competition.

Back in 1985, Rev. Verdery Kerr, Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, offered up a concept of the Soup Kitchen to area leaders based on the need in the community. Supported by various organizations in the City, along with \$10,000 in seed money from the NC Episcopal Diocese, the Soup Kitchen opened in April of 1986 at the Salvation Army on Barnes Street. The kitchen worked out of several locations before building its permanent site on Arlington Street. The Reidsville City Council and then-Mayor Benton Gooch donated matching funds toward construction of the building. The organization continues to provide meals free of charge based on donations from the public. The only true fundraising event for the Soup Kitchen is the Annual Christmas Brunch, held this year on Saturday, December 1, at 10 a.m. This year's event will be held at the Reidsville Event Center, 223 South Scales Street, and participants may attend for a \$25 donation. Other donations can be sent to the Reidsville Soup Kitchen, P.O. Box 1526, Reidsville, NC 27320.

Speaking of the Reidsville Salvation Army, it still remains a strong advocate within the community of giving to those in need. Its annual toy distribution event on December 18th brings volunteers from across the City and County to prepare the toys for distribution. The Army is especially active during the holidays, providing family dinners and keeping the heat on in low income homes while also providing toys and needed items at Christmastime.

And the giving is not only restricted to such organizations. Several of our area churches also have food pantries that provide staples for the kitchen of those needing some help. Again, the giving spirit within Reidsville is unparalleled!

The City of Reidsville tries to do its part as well. For 20-plus years, our Public Works Department has been sponsoring a canned food drive. It all started when an employee wanted to help out a needy family on one of the City's trash routes. Collection boxes are located at Public Works on Vance Street and at Reidsville City Hall, 230 West Morehead Street. Each year Public Works designates a local organization, church or family to get the food. Shortly before the Christmas holiday, Public Works employees fill up the back of a truck(s) and deliver the canned goods. For them, it is a way to give back to the community where they live and work. You can deliver canned items at these two locations through December 20. Public Works will also accept monetary contributions to benefit Hospice of Rockingham County as well.

Our Parks & Recreation Department also helps collect toys and coats as part of the "Pay it forward" Toy & Coat Drive in December. Parks & Rec, located at 201 N. Washington Avenue, is a drop off point for the drive conducted by the S & K Foundation. Items can be dropped off by December 1st for the giveaway, which is done on December 22nd from 9-12 noon by the Foundation.

In other events around Reidsville in December, you can check out:

Holiday Market at the Penn House.

As I noted in last month's column, this annual Holiday Market will be held at the City-owned Penn House, 324 Maple Avenue, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Arts and crafts from area artisans will fill the historic home, which is decorated for the season.

2018 Christmas Homes Tour in Reidsville.

This tour, sponsored by the United Methodist Women of Main Street United Methodist Church here in Reidsville, is included in this column because one of the homes listed is the Governor Reid House located at 321 Southeast Market Street. Hours for the tour are from 12 noon until 5 p.m. on Saturday, December 8. Four other private homes are included, but the Governor Reid House will be the site of the Bake Sale. Tickets are available through the United Methodist Women.

City Offices closed for the Holidays.

Just a reminder that the Reidsville City Offices will be closed Monday-Wednesday, December 24-26, for the Christmas holiday. We hope each of you is able to spend the time with family and friends. We wish each of you a wonderful 2019!