

# Wn

What's  
Happening!



## “Twas the Night Before Christmas’

*Bridge Players make holiday production a perfect family gift*

# "Twas the Night Before Christmas"



By Gall T. Boatman  
Special to What's Happening!

Reading about jolly, pink-cheeked Santa Claus, as described by poet Clement C. Moore in "A Visit from St. Nicholas," is part of many Christmas Eve traditions as families gather to await his arrival.

"'Twas the Night Before Christmas," a Bridge Players' holiday production that opens tomorrow in Burlington City is based on the poem but takes a few liberties with the familiar story. There are good guys and bad guys and even a chase scene, according to Maureen Broadbent, an Oaklyn resident, who directs the play.

But the poem is recited throughout, she said. "It starts with Clement Moore and his family. It's Christmas and he is writing the poem."

The play will continue in the Broad Street United Methodist Church, 36 E. Broad Street, with performances Sunday and Dec. 5 and Dec. 6.

It is a children's production with a cast of nearly 30, ranging in age from 3 to 18. A number of adult actors will also be on stage in key roles, Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, the Abominable Snowman and Rosie the Red-Nosed Reindeer, among them.

"It's Rosie who saves the day," Broadbent said.

What would a Christmas play be without music? This one has

familiar carols but watch out: some of the words have been changed.

As often happens with Bridge Players' productions, the cast includes some family members. Mike Holman, Burlington City, plays Santa Claus; his daughter, Lacey, 9, is an elf.

The family's involvement was Lacey's idea, Holman said, although he believes he was destined to play Jolly Old St. Nick.

"The role is an easy fit. It all makes sense; I am chubby and jolly," he said with a chuckle.

The two attended Burlington's Wood Street Fair in September and Lacey spotted the flyers announcing the production. She encouraged him to audition.

Lacey has two brothers, he said, ages 6 and 12. "Santa Claus is very important at our house."

The streets in town and those near the church will be decorated for the holidays adding to the festive atmosphere, he said.

"Before and after the production, people will have the opportunity to stroll around and enjoy that. It's a lovely little town."

Rehearsals and the production itself give him a chance to spend time with his daughter, a holiday bonus, he said.



Photos: DOUG LEE  
Gabrielle De Filippo (above from left) of Mount Laurel, Jamie Caniglia of Mt. Laurel, Nico Miele of Burlington, Kristen Schaffer of Moorestown, Sydney Kroberger of Moorestown, and Santa (Mike Holman of Burlington), Christina DeJoseph (left from left) of Palmyra and Sophia Chascsa of Delran with Santa (Mike Holman of Burlington).

## Bridge Players makes holiday production a perfect family gift

**if you go**

Bridge Players presents "Twas the Night Before Christmas"

Where: Broad Street United Methodist Church, 36 E. Broad St., Burlington City

When: Tomorrow and Dec. 6, 3 and 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 3 p.m., Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets: \$8

Information: (856) 303-7620

Broadbent said she likes the youngsters in the audience to be involved and invites them to participate. "Children from the audience become part of Santa's express and also listen to the reading of the poem," she said.

The one act play, based on Moore's poem and written by Kathryn Schultz Miller, lasts about an hour. Even the youngest children are enchanted by it, according to Broadbent.

Stewart Ayers, Burlington, plays Clement Clark Moore, the poet, and Shante Sykes, Maple Shade, is Mrs. Moore. Carmen Lombardo, Burlington, is Mrs. Claus.

Young cast members are from Willingboro, Mount Laurel, Moorestown, Eastampton, Palmyra, Tabernacle and Delran.

The Dec. 5 performance will be sign interpreted. Assistive Listening Devices are available upon request for Dec. 5 and Dec. 6.

Moore, then a resident of New York City, wrote his poem in the 1820s, although the first authorized published version did not come out until 1843. Over the years, generations of children have formed their images of Santa from its descriptions, "dressed all in fur, a right jolly old elf, and "riding with his eight tiny reindeer," prancing and pawing."



Children: Jamie Caniglia of Mount Laurel, Nico Miele of Burlington, Kristen Schaffer of Moorestown, Rebecca Clayton of Edgewater Park, Sydney Kroberger of Moorestown, Gabrielle De Filippo of Mt. Laurel and Hannah Reed of Edgewater Park. Also, Santa (Mike Holman of Burlington) and Mrs. Claus (Carmen Lombardo of Burlington).



The Bridge Players production of "Twas the Night Before Christmas" features Steve Ayers of Burlington as Clement Clark Moore and Mike Holman of Burlington as Santa. The holiday show will begin tomorrow at the Broad Street United Methodist Church in Burlington City.