One of several great Christmas presentations around the Highland Lakes last weekend was “The One Child Who Changed the World,” by students at the Smoking for Jesus Ministry’s Christian School in Hoover Valley on Sunday evening. The weekend was filled with a variety of Christmas events in each Highland Lakes area town; pictures from some of them are included in this paper, and you can check out the “Highland Lakes Weekly” Facebook page for many more.
By JOHN HALLOWELL

The Hill Country Community Theatre will present “A Don’t Hug Me Christmas Carol” again this weekend with 7:30 p.m. shows on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and a 2:15 matinee on Sunday.

Singer/songwriter W.C. Jameson (also an award-winning author of more than a hundred books) will perform in a free concert from 3 to 4 p.m. on Friday, December 15 at Lakeshore Library in Buchanan Dam. Refreshments will be served during the concert. Please call the library at 325-379-1174 to reserve your seat.

The “Best Christmas Pageant Ever” will be presented at First Baptist Church in Marble Falls at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 15, and 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturday, December 16. The musical tells how a family of misfits storms the local church and manages to take over the annual Christmas pageant. Once all is said and done, neither they nor the church folk will ever be the same again. Admission is free.

The Marble Falls High School Band Boosters will host a “Reindeer Run” fund-raiser this Saturday morning on Manzano Mile in Marble Falls. Check-in begins at 9 a.m. at the tennis courts, and the untried 5K run will begin at 10 a.m. on a designated cross-country course, enhanced by several easy holiday-themed obstacles. Registration fee includes runners bib, t-shirt and reindeer antlers; participants are also invited to compete in a tacky sweater contest (for a $5.00 entry fee, winner gets 1/2 the pot).

The Wildflower Dance Studio will present its Nutcracker ballet show at the Llano High School auditorium on Saturday (2 p.m. and 6 p.m.) and Sunday (2 p.m.), December 16 & 17. Weekday Ministries will hold a “Holiday Trio” event (Chili Cook-Off, Pie Contest and Old-Fashioned Caroling) from 4 to 6 p.m. on Saturday, December 16 at the Methodist Church in Burnet. Bubba Clark “and the Boys” will be playing their classic country music (one last time before retirement) from 6 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, December 16, at the Tailblazer Grille in Burnet.

Chapel of the Hills, on Hwy 29 in Buchanan Dam, will present the musical “The Journey Home” at 10:45 a.m. on Sunday, December 17. Kingsland Community Church will present its Christmas Cantata at the same time. Highland Lakes United Methodist Church will feature a special “bell choir,” and Kingsland First Baptist will host “Come to the Manger,” all on Sunday morning, December 17.

The Hill Country Chamber Orchestra will play a selection of Christmas tunes in a free concert at 6 p.m. on Sunday, December 17 at the Lantex Theater in Llano. The Llano County Historical Museum will host a “come and go” Open House from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, December 19.

The Llano Library invites the public to a special showing of the movie, “The Happiest Christmas Carol” at 2 p.m. on Thursday, December 21. Snacks and crafts will be provided, and Santa will visit after the movie.

Calamity & Grace, on the west side of the Llano square, will hold a Winter Solstice Party from 5 to 8 on Thursday, December 21.

Churches all around the Highland Lakes will have special Christmas Eve services on Sunday evening, December 24, and a free community dinner is planned for noon to two at the Red Barn in Buchanan Dam on Christmas Day. There will be a Kids Rockin’ Noon Year’s Eve Blast at the Llano Library from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday, December 29.
Scatterthought

Last weekend was amazing! There were so many good events in so many different places that I couldn't get to all of them, but I felt like I managed my schedule well enough that I was able to at least show up at most of the best photo ops. Burnet was the busiest town by far, with three BIG events and some smaller events, and I made it to six other towns on Saturday, and I have pictures from at least five in the paper this week (Kingsland, Granite Shoals, Marble Falls, Bedborough Dam and Llano). Sunday was a lot more relaxed, but I got pictures at two great Christmas programs.

This weekend won't be quite so busy, but don't think I'll have much chance to get bored. In addition to the events listed on page 2, I've heard that there will be a band concert and caroling in Burnet on Sunday afternoon. The concert, I believe, will be at the high school auditorium at 2:30 p.m., and will involve all the school bands from 6th grade to varsity; the Diva Dawgs and Bulldog Bros will have caroling and cookies, beginning at 5:30 at the Parent Resource Center (at the corner of Pierce & Beaver).

I was trying to hedge a little on those two events because the websites and Facebook pages looked at did not have a lot of details (but Darlene Denton could fill me in on Facebook at the last minute). I have guessed wrong on details a few times lately, and I hate to think that my events list could disappoint or inconvenience readers who depend on it.

One event in last week's article had the wrong date, and another got canceled without my knowledge; I hope this week's is more dependable.

As the holiday season winds down, I'm hoping that I'll be able to meet my goal of finishing the first complete draft of my book before January 1. I want to mention again that I don't plan to publish a paper in the week after Christmas; I'll skip from December 22 to January 5, and see if I am motivated enough to get that book done.

I have a couple of "business" items, so I won't waste all my space rambling about the book. I think I've mentioned before that the Highland Lakes Master Gardener Association is accepting applications for its 2018 class. The 13-week course will begin on Thursday, February 15, and will be held in Burnet. It is sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, and requires volunteering in the community and continuing education. The cost is $150, which covers the cost of resource materials, t-shirt and field trips. See the HLGA website, www.hlmgareview.com, for more information and to download the application and background check form. Contact Amy Parke at 254-833-2720 or steve@parke.com for questions or for more information.

You've probably heard of Kim Turk's Camp Agape. It is a free therapeutic camp experience for children suffering the loss of a parent or other significant familial figure from tragedies such as homicide, suicide, illness, military combat. Children enjoy the fun of a normal summer camp plus group therapy activities that incorporate the use of art and music to assist with the bereavement process.

Camp Agape was founded in 2000 and is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. During the past 17 years, Camp Agape has served more than 600 area children at its annual one-week camp. Camp Agape is the only Christian-based children's bereavement camp in the nation.

Now the camp is announcing the establishment of a permanent endowment through the Highland Lakes Legacy Fund (HLLE). Gifts to the endowed fund will support current and future operations to give grieving children the needed tools to manage profound loss. For additional information, visit www.CampAgapeTexas.org or call (830) 385-3916.

Last month, for the first time in the organization's history, Camp Agape held a weekend retreat for families recovering from the death of a loved one. Due to the retreat's success, a weekend for grief recovery will become an annual event for families whose children attend Camp Agape's summer program. The 2018 children's camp is July 16-19 at Camp Agape's Retreat Center, outside of Burnet.
The successful Jingle Mingle at the Kingsland Community Center last Thursday evening provided an enjoyable “Sip n Shop” experience while raising more than $1,600 for CASA.

Friday night’s Christmas Gala brought a cheerful crowd to the Kingsland Community Center for a delicious meal and excellent live dance music by The Skylarks.

The Kingsland Chamber of Commerce went upscale on Wednesday morning with a Breakfast Club meeting in the beautifully-decorated dining room at the Vineyard B&B at Lost Creek Ranch, located on Ranch Road 2233 near Sunrise Beach. Not only were the surroundings very comfortable at the early-morning networking meeting, but those who attended were served a delicious full breakfast. This month’s Breakfast Club meeting was sponsored by Linda Moreau, of ReMax Highland Lakes Real Estate.

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The Christmas spirit is alive and well in Kingsland! Library staffers (L-R) Stacey Sisco, Claudia Wolfe, Amber Milum and April Puryear posed for this photo with Colleen Langworthy (one of the many donors for this year’s Angel Tree). Multiple gifts were donated for each of 63 children in the Kingsland community.

Children at Kingsland School collected two big boxes full of gifts for distribution in the Sheriff’s Office’s “Brown Santa” program. In the photo above, principal Meloni Puishes posed with deputies Leroy Rodriguez and Ryan Van Pelt, who came to pick up the gifts.

Teresa Gray and Chelsea Morrow visited the CASA office in Kingsland on Wednesday to present the proceeds from their “Jingle Mingle” at the Kingsland Community Center to Shannon Heep and Diana Tryon, of CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), which serves more than 300 children in the Highland Lakes area. The toys on the tables behind them were collected for their young clients. The next “Sip n Shop” event, to benefit another local charity, will be held in May.

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Executive Director Bill Drake, of the Highland Lakes Boys & Girls Club, addressed the Men’s Breakfast at the Kingsland Community Church on Tuesday to report on the successful new branch in Kingsland. The church is one of many supporters of the Kingsland Club, which provides a safe place for after-school meals, help with homework and lots of fun for more than 60 children at the Family Life Center of Kingsland’s First Baptist Church.

Young entrepreneurs offered a variety of handmade products for sale to a steady stream of customers at Kingsland’s first Kids’ Market, organized by Sasha Fry (of Kloset Deja Vu) and her daughter, Raina, at Kingsland Plaza last Saturday.

Oma’s Attic is a new business in Kingsland, opened by Lisa Moore in the old “Johnson’s Green Acres Miniature Golf” building (more recently Texas Better Papers, Bloomin’ Time and Lake Fun Creations). Lisa stocks a wide variety of merchandise, including quality home decor, craft items, tools (and even hundreds of model railroad cars!)

These colorfully-clad volunteers welcomed guests at Buchanan Arts & Crafts’ Christmas Bazaar and Bake Sale last Saturday. The well-known group offered original art, handmade crafts and delicious baked goods at their Buchanan Dam gallery.
Trucked-in snow turned a beautiful Fall afternoon into a Winter Wonderland at Badu Park in Llano's annual Snow Day adventure. A long line formed at the slide, while others had snowball fights on level ground.

The LOGOS Christmas program used human and animal characters to tell the story of Christ’s birth in a good-humored and heart-warming way last Sunday evening at Lutie Watkins Memorial United Methodist Church in Llano.

Well-known guitarist Paul Finley, a regular visitor from Austin, was accompanied by friends Sharon Grant and Daniel Makins, also of Austin, in a concert at Fuel Coffee House in Llano last Saturday night.
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Christmas at Fort Croghan

The decorated cabins at Burnet’s Fort Croghan were both an old-fashioned Christmas celebration and a fascinating “living history” lesson. Volunteers demonstrated tools and crafts of the pioneer days while several different groups provided live music.

The group above includes Perry Goble, Jeff Goble and their sister, (Burnet’s mayor) Crista Bromley.

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A new feature for Burnet’s Christmas on the Square this year was trucked-in snow for sliding, snowball fights, etc.

A good crowd attended Burnet’s Christmas on the Square event last Saturday to enjoy live music, craft and food vendors, the Christmas Parade, the bicycle giveaway, the official lighting of the square and more. Last weekend also featured the popular Main Street Bethlehem production, and a huge crowd gathered just east of the square for that attraction.

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Teacher Robert Schneider, of Harmony School of Creative Arts, joined students Tate and Tristan Johnson, Tim Weagant, Matthew Kirtman and Carleigh Henderson in a series of Christmas carols during the school’s Christmas Music Recital at First United Methodist Church of Marble Falls on Monday evening. Several other students also performed.

Saturday was a perfect day for an outdoor Christmas Market on Main Street in Marble Falls, and a steady stream of shoppers took advantage of the beautiful weather to look for Christmas gifts.

One of the most popular stops at the Marble Falls Christmas Market was “Santa Paws,” a booth set up by Living Love Animal Rescue’s thrift store. Pet owners could bring their furry friends to get photos with Santa while owners shopped for pet-friendly wares.
Members of the Kingsland Lions Club (Ted Langworthy, Jim Chapman and Ron Hall) were “ringing the bell” for the Salvation Army outside the Kingsland Post Office on Wednesday morning.

Volunteers from the Upper Highland Lakes Nature Center, based at Reveille Peak Ranch in northwestern Burnet County, brought some interesting displays to Numinous Coffee Roasters in Marble Falls last Saturday for their every-other-Saturday-morning “Taste of Nature” program, set to resume after the holidays.

Art enthusiasts gathered at the Llano Fine Art Gallery for an Open House, part of the “Shopping Market” which continues through the Christmas season.

These volunteers from the Llano Cowboy Church held a big Christmas Bazaar at the American Legion Hall in Llano last Saturday.

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Bunet Mayor Crista Bromley and her mother, City Historical Board member Carole Goble, addressed the small crowd at The Napping Mouse on Saturday morning before unveiling the historical marker which has been presented to owners Berenice and Danny Dugain (joined at the ceremony by their daughter, Sarah). The Dugains spent much of the past four years renovating the historic building at 304 South Main Street (just off the square). The interior decor of the unique shop includes an advertising mural from a long-forgotten pharmacy and pictures from the Debo family’s pre-WW II Cowboy Cafe, which shared the building in the early 20th century. The Napping Mouse features greeting cards, wrapping paper, stationary and more.

Staffers at the Lakeside Library, on Hwy 261 in Buchanan Dam, greeted guests at the library’s Christmas Open House on Monday afternoon (from left: Nancy Patrick, Linda Wallen and Melissa MacDougal). The library has had a busy month, and more activities are planned. Authors/singer/songwriter W.C. Jameson will be there for a musical program from 3 to 4 p.m. this Friday (December 15).

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Music around the Lakes

Above: The legendary Bellamy brothers, who have been performing together since 1968 and recently celebrated "40 Years of Hits," filled the Lantex Theater for two great shows of the Llano Country Opry last Saturday.

At left: Talented teen Tori Vourganas, from Houston, has become a fairly regular visitor to the Llano Country Opry, delighting the crowds with her fiddling skill and her powerful voice.

The Here and Now headlined last Saturday Night's Celtic Christmas at the Uptown Theater in Marble Falls. They were joined by the Louisiana Cajun/Irish quartet, Celjun, and the Nollaig Irish Dancers in the unique variety show.

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Hilarity ensues when a grumpy bar owner is injured in a snowmobile accident, and is forced by an apparition of his romantic rival to watch his past, present and future life while he is at the hospital in a coma. The Hill Country Community Theatre production of “A Don’t Hug Me Christmas Carol” will be performed one more weekend (see ad on page 10). It stars (L-R, above): Kay Baker, Guy Gober, Cody Petty, Kyle Hinling and Mandi Whittlesey.

Hill Country Humane Society would like to introduce you to Hope, a Fox Terrier mix who weighs about 8 pounds, and is about one year old. Hope is a very sweet girl who came to us as a stray and really needs a home full of love and affection. She is a happy dog who enjoys playing and being in your lap. Hope deserves a home where she can be spoiled and be treated like a queen. To meet Hope, please call us at 512-733-5463. We are open Thursday through Monday, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
You can see all our wonderful animals at www.HillCountryHumaneSociety.org

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