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Happy Holidays

How nice is it to light the fireplace in the morning? Or to wear a jacket yet still use your car's air-conditioner during the day in December? Traditions are a great part of the holidays, and there is no better place than Arizona to have them. There are many that you can create here with your family. Here are two daytrips that I recommend; they can be the start of a tradition. You may even see snow.

- The North Pole Experience A few hours outside of the Valley, in Greer, awaits a Christmas adventure. Families enjoy dinner at the historic Molly Butler Lodge, hop aboard the Candy Cane Express and end up in the North Pole, where little ones can see toys on conveyor belts and enjoy milk and cookies with Mrs. Claus. www.northpoleexperience.com.

- The Polar Express Remember the Tom Hanks' movie? Well, it comes to life once kids and their parents get cozy on the Grand Canyon Railway en route to the North Pole. Once they arrive, Santa Claus and his reindeer await. www.thetrain.com.

We are also covering and invited to some of the Valley's most private holiday parties—one that might include taking a boat to an undisclosed island or beach at Lake Pleasant and having a Christmas bonfire party complete with dinner and s'mores. Another fun party might be renting a helicopter and hovering over the best decorated homes in the Valley. (We did that last year; the people at Desert Mountain were not happy with the flyovers so beware.) You can see all of this and learn more each and every day at AZFoothills.com and, now, at our Web site's new The Daily 60.

No matter what you do this season or how you celebrate, the most important part of the holidays is family. We should treat every day of our life as a holiday, taking the time to call and visit with loved ones. This holiday may be my last Christmas with my mother, but with the hope and determination she has, it will be our best ever. Thank you for everyone's notes and support regarding my mother.

Our family at Arizona Foothills wishes you the very best holiday season!

Michael S. Dee President and Publisher