

# Santa brings cheer to Lincoln children

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Harley Davidson motorcycle and will speak to shoppers, along with Mayor Don Wesley.

At 6 p.m., a switch will be thrown lighting all the SouthPointe stores and the decorated 35-foot Colorado Blue Spruce in the center courtyard.

"Santa's Village will be in the only space left unleased at SouthPointe," said SouthPointe Pavilions General Manager Joan Yant. "It's an empty bay that we've decorated for the occasion."

The village will be near the cinema, just west of Journeys shoe store. Santa will be there with his elf every Saturday and Sunday from 12 to 5 p.m. until Christmas Eve.

For children who can't make it to see him on the weekend, he'll have a mailbox outside the village where they can deliver letters to him. If they put their return address on the envelope, Santa will write back.

"That way, during the week children can still contact him, and every child will have a chance to communicate with Santa," Yant said.

The SouthPointe Santa has done home and day care visits, company holiday parties, business grand openings and open houses throughout southeast Nebraska and even has his own specially designed Santa suit that ran a cool \$1,200, he said.

In the years working as Santa, he says children have had some pretty humorous gift wishes.

He recalls a seven-year-old who wanted a red convertible and another child who thought he needed a live elephant, but he also remembers some more serious requests.

"One little boy, about six years old, said he'd waited all year to see me and knew that I could do miracles," he said. "I asked him what he wanted for Christmas, and he said, 'My mommy died of cancer this year, and I want you to bring her back.'"

When you're Santa, you have to be quick on your feet," he said. "I went into a positive message and told him there are some things that even Santa can't do. That's just one of the tearjerkers."

SouthPointe Santa said he enjoys his job, especially on the days he meets children who might not have much of a Christmas if it weren't for their visit to see him.

"A lot of kids I see might not have a Christmas with gifts, so part of my job is just bringing a sparkle to their eyes and brightening their Christmas," he said.

For those who want to help brighten a child's Christmas, two loving trees will be set in Santa's Village, sponsored by Friendship Home and the Salvation Army.

These trees will be a place where people can purchase gifts and leave them for children that might not otherwise receive any gifts this holiday season.

# Exposing Santa painful to some

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was acquired with age.

"I always kind of wondered how (Santa Claus) got around to everybody's house in one night," said Jeremy Albin, a sophomore biosystems engineering major.

"Then his handwriting kind of looked like my mom's," Albin said.

For other students, the moment is forever etched in their minds.

"I remember every detail. Matt Gharst told me in the

third grade," said Mayfield, who then became confused by her parents when they still insisted Santa Claus was real.

"I was definitely hurt," said Mayfield.

Dr. Jeffrey Stormburg, a practicing psychotherapist in Lincoln, said small white lies are suitable when answering a child's questions about Santa Claus.

"Society has a lot of age appropriate half-truths that are pretty harmless, but I always encourage parents to tell the truth," Stormburg said.

Some parents decided not to

befuddle their children with half-truths about Santa.

"My mom was so devastated when she found out that Santa wasn't real that she decided not to tell us," said Lindsay Acklie, a sophomore accounting major.

"I always knew when others didn't, but we couldn't tell them," Acklie said.

Santa Claus or Santa not, life continued Kunz said.

"I still get presents from Santa," Kunz said. "They haven't lost their meaning because I know that someone special cares."

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