

Christmas Wishes to One and All

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

The Christmas Holiday is nigh upon us. People are rushing around trying to finish last minute shopping and preparations. Some folks are still wondering if they should get together with the latest Covid variant gaining ground. Sadly, in the hustle and bustle, it'll all be over before we know it and we'll be into the challenge of a new year!

If I see you out on the street, my greeting to you may be varied anywhere between Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays. People need to keep in mind that the period from mid November thru January 1st includes over a dozen different holidays that people may be celebrating. While I can never remember them all I don't want to exclude any from my greeting. I celebrate Christmas but I have distant relatives that celebrate St. Lucia's Day. I have Jewish friends who just finished celebrating Hannukah. I have Hindu friends who earlier this fall celebrated Diwali. I also even have friends who celebrate the winter solstice - the celebration known as Yule. While I may not be overly familiar with many of these celebrations, I enjoy learning of them just to enrich myself. Besides, there is often food involved! So if I see you and wish you a Happy Holidays, it may include Christmas, I may want to include Christmas and New Year's together or I'm just not sure which holiday you celebrate and wish to be inclusive of all. Please don't take offense.

Now back to the hustle and bustle. If I could change one thing about the holidays for everyone, it'd be that things slow down for one and all so that you can enjoy who you are with and so you have time to pause and contemplate whatever holiday you are celebrating. So many times I see families trying to get everyone together. They have to spend Christmas Eve here, and Christmas Day there and the day after Christmas somewhere else. I just want to scream, "STOP!"

My wife and I are very fortunate that we both had parents that enjoyed when we could be with them on the holidays, but didn't demand it. If we wanted to be with them then great! If we were starting new traditions of our own they were very supportive. As an adult they never made me feel that I HAD to be there with them on any holiday. It made the holidays that we did spend with them all the more enjoyable, and relaxing, because we were there because we wanted to be there, not because we had been guilted into feeling that we had to be there.

I look forward to the December holiday season every year and try to see it through the eyes of a 5 year old; the excitement, the wonder, the joy. Every year, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, I read Dicken's "A Christmas Carol." There are portions of it I can now recite from memory. The childlike joy and giddiness that Scrooge experiences at the end of the book is my goal every year. Yes, it centers around Christmas, but the joy that Scrooge learns to have is a joy for life and the people around him. It isn't the presents, it's the people and their lives that we get to enjoy and enhance. It's the simple fact that anyone can make positive impacts on the people around them, every single day.

So my wishes for you through the coming days is simple. I hope that you have the time to slow down, relax, and enjoy the moments with family or friends, or even your own solitude if that is what you desire. If you have to travel and be on the road, be safe, obey the speed limits, and please, do not drive impaired regardless if that impairment is nothing more than being tired. The holiday season should be one of joy, peace and hope, not tragedy. Happy holidays, merry Christmas and a very happy new year to one and all!