

Are you ready for Christmas? Most would say no, however, the Black River Falls Downtown Association is preparing a winter celebration that will surpass all others!

You are invited to experience the sights, sounds and tastes of Christmas. With a visit to Black River Falls' annual Christkindl Festival, you'll relive a centuries-old tradition.

The Black River Falls Downtown Association is bringing a new level of Christmas charm and Old World traditions to the area. No one knows how to celebrate Christmas like the Germans. It's thanks to German traditions that we decorate Christmas Trees, hang Christmas Wreaths and put Nutcrackers on mantels. Because of them, we bake Gingerbread men, open Advent Calendars, fill Stockings with treats and put Angels on-top of Christmas Trees.

Since the Middle Ages, German towns have held Christ-child markets, or Christkindlmarkt, in their market squares. The tradition of the Christkindl is known among German-speaking countries such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and also Czech Republic, Italy, Liechtenstein and even some South American countries. Christkindl is a fairy-like being, dressed in a gold and white robe with a crown atop her golden hair. Depending on region and family tradition, either the Christkind (pronounced Kristkint) or "Der Weihnachtsmann" (Father Christmas, also known as Kris Kringle and Santa Claus) will be the bearer of gifts for children on Christmas Eve.

During Advent, which runs approximately from our Thanksgiving holiday through Christmas Eve, rustic timber booths draped with fragrant evergreen boughs, line the town squares. It is here that vendors and artists sell items such as toys, blown-glass ornaments, cones of warm sugared almonds and steaming mugs of Glühwein (spiced mulled wine) to holiday shoppers. It's a charming tradition, but a hard one to import to the United States. We have the convenience of Malls, not market squares. But that hasn't stopped the Black River Falls Downtown Association from creating a new tradition, complete with Father Christmas and Christkindl, the markets namesake.

During our Christkindl Festival, you will enjoy traditional wares, unique, quality, hand-crafted gifts at the Christkindlmarkt. Inside festive heated tents, you will find a heart-warming ambiance filled with the Christmas Spirit as you drift from booth to booth. Take in the joys of the holidays by listening and watching on-stage performances by bell ringers, dancers, theatre groups and local musicians. Kindling the magic of Christmas, be sure to see the live reindeer exhibit. In the Spirit of Christmas, there will be many opportunities to give back to the community. Get a head-start on your holiday baking by picking up some homemade sweets from Mrs. Claus' Cookie Shoppe located at the Christkindlmarkt. The baked goods are donated and proceeds from the sale will benefit a local charity. Since the festival is located in Downtown Black River Falls this allows you to visit all the unique shops and businesses. Stroll down the streets and vote on a favorite window display and see the craftsmanship of local talent at the Gingerbread House exhibit at Black River Country Bank which is hosting the entries for the Gingerbread House Contest. As night-time approaches, witness the beauty of the evening Christkindl Festival parade called the Night of Lights. For an even more magical winter experience, take a romantic evening ride in a horse-drawn carriage or wagon. Imagine how much fun you and your family will have starting off the holiday season with a visit to Black River Falls' Christkindl Festival.

This exciting, seasonal event celebrating the Old World charms of Christmas with residents of and visitors to Black River Falls, WI kicks off with a Christmas Tree lighting ceremony and Coronation event of Christkindl and Father Christmas on the evening of Friday, December 4th, 2009. The Black River Area Chamber of Commerce along with the Black River Falls Downtown Association will select one young lady and one young man from Jackson County who represents the Spirit of Christmas and meets all contestant qualifications. Young ladies and gentlemen between the ages of 14 and 18 will be considered as a contestant. Those interested in the honor of being this Year's Christkindl or Father Christmas need to contact the Black River Area Chamber of Commerce for an application.

The Christkindl Festival events continue Saturday morning the 5th with a special Breakfast with Christkindl and Father Christmas, Pictures with Santa at the Jackson County Bank and the Christkindlmarkt which is open from 9am to 9pm.

Keeping with Old World traditions, The Black River Falls Downtown Association has beautiful hand-blown glass, individually painted, keepsake ornaments available for sale. Each ornament has been signed by artisan Susan Sampson and is numbered for authenticity. These one-of-a-kind pieces of art are available for purchase at The Merchant General Store, Sampson Art Gallery, River Country Fitness, The Consignment Shop & More and will be available at the Christkindlmarkt in Black River Falls. Only a limited supply of ornaments are available. Do not miss out on your chance to have one of these gorgeous collectibles.

It is thanks to area community members, businesses and organizations that an event of this magnitude is possible. If you are interested in taking part in this unique event, please contact the Christkindl Festival Committee. Applications are now being accepted for Christkindlmarkt merchandise vendors, food vendors, contestants for Christkindl and Father Christmas, parade float entries, entertainment groups, Gingerbread House contestants and entries for the Community Tour of Lights.

If you are interested in volunteering and/or sponsoring any of the activities, exhibits or costs associated with the Christkindl Festival, please contact the Christkindl Festival Committee. We appreciate all levels of sponsorship and welcome any support you can provide.

Any questions regarding the events, volunteerism and/or sponsorship should be directed to the Christkindl Festival Committee. Valerie Maurer and Suzette Turk —(715) 284-0883. Darren Durman—(715) 284-5700
Email: info@downtownblackriverfalls.com Website: www.christkindlfestival.com

