Texas Christmas Traditions
Bernie Nillo, Commissioner

Towns across the Lone Star State keep Christmas and the holidays their way. The Texas cowboy is celebrated during the Christmas season with wreaths of barbed wire centered around an old boot. Wreaths of cactus pads strung together celebrate our nearness to the desert. Longhorns pull Santa's sleigh, replacing Rudolph and the other Reindeer. Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders each year ignite Christmas cheer at Cowboys Stadium with our Christmas Cheers Halftime Spectacular. The Dallas Cowboys are known for making entertainment bigger and better, and the Christmas halftime show is no exception. A Christmas cast of 167 performers will include a magical mix of Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders who will be joined by tumbling elves, rapping santas and twirling holiday flags. The Texas love of barbecue, at Christmas, makes as many smoked turkeys as roasted birds. The cajun influence from Southeast Texas brought fried turkey to the rest of Texas. Citrus from the Rio Grande Valley and pecans from Central and East Texas are found all over America and the world. The Texas Hill Country towns of Boerne, Burnet, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg, Goldthwaite, Johnson City, Llano, Marble Falls, New Braunfels, Round Mountain and Wimberley are all part of the Hill Country Lighting Trail. Each town has dazzling light displays. Each of the towns has its own separate events in addition to being part of the Lighting Trail, such as New Braunfel's Santa's Ranch, a drive-through Christmas Light Park with over a million lights. The Mexican connection to Texas is represented by many things, like tamales, menudo and luminarias. Forget the fruitcake and nix the nog. In Texas, it wouldn't be Christmas without tamales.

Through the years, the preparation of the labor-intensive food became a social event, called a tamalada, as women from ranches across Mexico and what's now the American Southwest gathered...
**Hanukkah**  
*Miriam Schiffman*

My earliest memories of celebrating the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah are of gatherings at my grandmother's house in Boston, Mass. with all of my aunts, uncles and cousins. There were a lot of them - grandma had 8 children and they each (except for my parents) had at least two or more children. As we arrived grandma gave each of the children a silver 50 cent piece! What a gift in those days. Because this was during WWII the rooms were darkened to the outside and cozy. Each child entertained the gathering (not an easy task for someone like me, shy and very short on talent). Then we would begin the traditions that have been part of Jewish life all over the world for nearly 2,000 years.

Hanukkah, also called the Festival of Lights, is not a religious holiday. It dates back to events that occurred during the 2nd century BCE when the Romans occupied Jerusalem. It commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem after a small army led by the Maccabee family won a long war against the Romans who would not permit the Jews to worship their own religion. Once the Temple, desecrated by the Romans, was cleaned and restored, an eight day celebration of the victory was declared. A story grew that said that, when it came time to relight the Temple's eternal flame, there was only enough oil for one day. Oil was sent for from the country-side, but a miracle happened - that small amount of oil lasted for eight days until more arrived. Thus, even more reason to celebrate.

Recalling this event was part of the traditional celebration of Hannukah. Eating fried foods (remember the oil) such as latkes (potato pancakes) and donuts is another. Starting at sundown on the eve of the first day we begin to light the hanukiah, a candelabra, which has a spot for eight candles plus the "shamish," a candle used to light the others. We say a blessing for the miracle of light as we light the candles... one the first night, two on the second night and so on, until eight candles are lit on the last night. Some families show their hanukiah in the window; others, like ourselves, do not. There are songs to sing, and when children are present a game of dreidle is played with nuts or candies. The dreidle is spun and, depending on which of 4 Hebrew letters turns up, one wins something - or nothing. Many families give the children gifts, but that is not a necessary part of the celebration.

Hanukkah occurs sometime between late November and late December - different each year because a lunar calendar is used. Everywhere, in

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Hanukah
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slightly different form depending on which country, the holiday is celebrated with lighting the hanukiah, saying the blessings, singing songs and eating fried foods. This is what we did at my grandmother's house and what my husband and I do today with some modification for health. My latkes are baked - with a tad bit of oil for tradition's sake (no donuts).

Baked Latke Recipe
Miriam Schiffman

| 6 large potatoes | 2 eggs (or 4 egg whites) |
| 1 small onion, grated | 2 Tb flour |
| 1 tsp. salt | 1/4 tsp baking powder |

Heat oven to 500 degrees and lightly oil baking sheet.
Peel potatoes, grate and squeeze dry. Add eggs, mix with other ingredients and add to potatoes. Make 8 or more mounds on the sheet and press to 1/4" each. Bake 10 min. Press down with spatula and bake 5 min. more. Turn and bake 2nd side until crisp @7 min.
Enjoy with sour cream and/or applesauce.
Texas Christmas Traditions
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to prepare the Christmas Eve feast. Here’s what I have learned over the years helping out in the kitchen. Assembling the essential ingredients, the corn husk wrappers and the pork, chicken, beans, chilies and spices that would be made into savory fillings, is very important. Clean the husks of fibers and dirt, then put them into ice chests and cover them with water so they will be clean and pliable. Preparing the masa is the most time consuming part. For me, buying the prepared dough saves time and energy. The whole time, you’re not only working and making the tamales, but you’re visiting with your friends and eating. At the end of the assembly line, the final step is to wrap and label the 200 or more different types of tamales-pork, bean, chicken, so each family can take home a specially prepared Christmas Eve dinner. Have a great Christmas from the Lone Star State, with a touch of Hawaii. Aloha, Y’all!!!

Holiday Shortbread Cookies
Sandra Johnson Simon, Commissioner

Ingredients
• 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus more for the pan
• 1 cup all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled, plus more for pressing in the dough
• 2 tablespoons cornstarch
• 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
• 1/4 cup sugar
• 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Directions
1. Heat oven to 350° F. Butter an 8-inch round cake pan and line with a circle of parchment. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, cornstarch, and salt; set aside.
2. Using an electric mixer, beat the butter, sugar, and vanilla on medium-high until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Reduce mixer speed to low and gradually add the flour mixture, mixing until just combined (do not over mix).
4. With floured fingers, press the dough into the prepared pan and prick all over with a fork.
5. Bake until golden and firm, 30 to 40 minutes. When cool enough to handle, turn the shortbread out of the pan and, using a serrated knife, cut into 12 wedges. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
Kwanzaa
Miriam Schiffman

Kwanzaa is an African American and Pan-African holiday, which celebrates family, community and culture and draws from the cultures of various African peoples. It is celebrated from December 26 through January 1.

Its origins are in the ancient first harvest celebrations of Africa. Kwanzaa means "first fruits of the harvest" in Swahili. The holiday builds on the five fundamental activities of "first fruit" celebrations: ingathering; reverence; commemoration; re-commitment; and celebration.

Although based on ancient tradition Kwanzaa is a relatively new holiday. Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor, author and scholar-activist created it in 1966 as a way for African Americans and those of African ancestry elsewhere in the world to connect with their heritage and culture.

One each of the seven days of celebration emphasis is placed on one of the seven core values. These principles are Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith.

The celebration of Kwanzaa involves decorating one's home with various objects, including fruit and other crops, symbols of the seven principles, a cup to represent family and community unity, and a Kinara, a seven-pronged candle holder. Three of the candles are red to represent struggle, three are green to represent hope and the center candle is black to signify those who draw their heritage from Africa.

On each day the black candle is lit along with candles on each side, representing the number of days of celebration, until on the final day all seven candles are ablaze. Many families give the honor of lighting the candles to the youngest child. Some give it to the eldest family member. Others might have a different family member lighting the candles each night. Readings, drumming and music, discussions and artistic performances can accompany the candle lighting. Families are encouraged to start their own traditions. On the sixth day a communal, cooperative feast is held and on the last day, January 1, gifts are exchanged between parents and children.

It is estimated that some 18 million African Americans take part in Kwanzaa. Much of the above information came from the official Kwanzaa website: http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org
13th Annual Healthy Aging Fair
Delbert Walker, Area Agency on Aging

The Annual Healthy Aging Fair completed its 13th successful offering this year! Chabot College Grand Court provided the ideal setting for the 2014 extravaganza of health and wholeness on Wednesday, August 6th. The Healthy Aging Fair warmly welcomed the gathering of health conscious participants and service oriented providers and health practitioners. Alameda County District 4 Supervisor Nate Miley and Union City Mayor Carol Dutra-Vernaci delivered welcome addresses to the crowd of exuberant attendees. Multiple FREE health screenings services were offered along with invaluable information, interactive activities, live entertainment and a lite nutritious lunch. Presentation topics included Advance Planning, California Senior Legislature (CSL), Falls Prevention, Emergency Preparedness, Getting the Most OUT OF LIFE-Hospice Project, Medication Management, and Somatic Movement-Fluid After 50. We appreciate the generous contributions of our Sponsors, Exhibitors, Health Screening Practitioners, Presenters, Donors, Entertainers, Attendees, and VOLUNTEERS! Together, we are truly making a difference through our continued quest to interest, excite, equip, and empower Older Adults in Alameda County to live healthier, happier, and more satisfying lives.

Man Killed in Apparent Oakland Industrial Accident ID’d as Fremont Resident
By Natalie Neysa Alund Bay Area News Group
Permission to reprint was granted by Oakland Tribune, Bay Area News Group

OAKLAND -- A man crushed to death between two buses Friday in an apparent industrial accident at an East Oakland repair yard has been identified as 55-year-old Tarsem Josen, according to the Alameda County Coroner's Office. Josen, who was from Fremont and who police believed to be a mechanic at Charter Pros Bus Company, in the 700 block of 45th Avenue, was found by other workers about 12:04 p.m. wedged between two buses. Firefighters and paramedics responded but he was pronounced dead a short time later. How Josen got between the buses or how long he was trapped before he was found remains under investigation on Saturday. Police turned over the investigation to officials with Cal/OSHA. Contact Natalie Neysa Alund at 510-293-2469. Follow her at Twitter.com/nataliealund.
Senior Information

Flu and Pneumonia Vaccination Clinics now available in Alameda County
Flu season is upon us once again, and the Alameda County Public Health Department offers the following general information and recommendations:

What is Flu?
The Flu is a common infectious disease caused by influenza (flu) viruses. The flu usually affects a person's nose, throat and lungs. The virus spreads easily from person to person and can lead to serious illness and even death. The usual signs and symptoms of the flu are cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, and feeling very tired. Most people also have a fever. Others may throw up and have diarrhea.

How is Flu Spread?
The flu spreads through tiny wet drops produced when a person coughs, sneezes, or talks. A person can get the flu by breathing in these wet drops, or by touching items and surfaces covered with these drops and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. People who have the flu may spread it to others about 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after. Children and people with weak immune systems can spread the flu virus for a longer period of time. However, people are most contagious during the first three days of illness.

This means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Almost half of the people with the flu virus do not know that they have the flu and continue with their daily activities.

If you are sick, we recommend that you stay home and stay away from others until 24 hours after your fever is gone. What Can You Do to Protect Yourself and Your Family?

Get a vaccine
It is important for everyone 6 months and older to get a flu vaccine in the fall and winter. In addition to the flu shot, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a pneumonia shot if you are over 65, have a chronic illness, such as kidney disease, asthma, or diabetes, or have a weakened immune system due to HIV/AIDS or cancer.

The Alameda County Public Health Department provides seasonal vaccines to health centers, community and senior centers across the county. These public flu clinics are generally free of charge to those who do not have health insurance, or, in many cases, Medicare can be billed. You can also contact your local health provider or pharmacy. For an up-to-date list of locations near you organized by zip code, contact the Sutter Care at Home hotline at 1-800-500-2400 or go to www.suttervna.org.

Holiday Food Hotline
From November 1 through December 25, the Alameda County Community Food Bank will offer information about sites that distribute holiday food. To access it, call 510-635-3663 and follow the prompts for holiday food. After you enter your Zip code and household size, a prerecorded message will inform you of locations near you.

This service operates in addition to their Emergency Food Helpline at 1-800-870-3663, which will direct callers to community programs or to churches that offer free groceries or free meals. For a list of senior meal sites, including senior centers in your area, please contact our Senior Information line at (510) 577-3530 or 1-800-510-2020.

Call Information and Assistance at (800) 510-2020 or (510) 577-3530
Christmas All Year Long
Some Basic Thoughts
By Maureen Schulz

Every time we see what is around us as if we saw it for the first time, it is Christmas.

Every time we really try to hear what someone is trying to say, it is Christmas.

Every time we push the boundaries of what we think is possible, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, it is Christmas.

Every time we acknowledge something we know we have done wrong, it is Christmas.

Every time we wake ourselves up when we function in an automated existence and come back to really be here, in the present moment, it is Christmas.