Tips for a HO-HO-COVID kind of holiday this year

As we draw closer to the holiday season, it’s important to pause in planning to think about some easy adjustments you and your family can make to help keep everyone healthy. Social distancing is so important to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As a result, some annual gatherings may be altered or canceled this year. This can be difficult for some and family members may experience an emotional response when traditions may not work out this year.

To help with this, here are some ideas and recommendations on how you and yours can still celebrate events without exposing yourself, or your loved ones, to infection.

During Halloween activities:

- Do not use a costume mask as a substitute for a cloth mask, unless it has two layers of cloth and can cover your mouth and nose without gaps.
- Do not wear a costume mask over a cloth mask because it can be dangerous by making it hard to breathe. Consider wearing a Halloween-themed cloth mask instead.
- If you or someone else in your household may have COVID-19, you should not participate in in-person events, and should not give out candy to trick-or-treaters.
- Consider alternative activities for Halloween this year. Household members could:
  o Carve or decorate pumpkins;
  o Watch Halloween-themed movies, keeping with an age-appropriate thrill factor;
  o Have a scavenger hunt outside for Halloween or fall-themed items;
  o Invite friends and neighbors to gather for these outdoor activities, and practice social distancing while still enjoying the camaraderie.

If hosting an event for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, consider:

- Having the event outdoors if weather is favorable. (In SW MO, it is possible.)
- If staying indoors, avoid crowded, poorly ventilated or fully enclosed indoor spaces. Increase ventilation by opening windows and/or doors to the extent that is safe and feasible with weather conditions.
- Reducing the number of people at your event if possible.
- Providing or encouraging others to bring items to help you and others stay healthy, such as extra masks, individually wrapped plasticware, hand sanitizer and tissues.

If attending holiday gatherings at friends or family, please:

- Be a courteous guest and don’t go if you are not feeling well, or if others in your household have been sick. Although you may not be exhibiting symptoms, there is a possibility that you could spread the illness.
- Before you go, check with the host to ensure people will be wearing masks and practicing social distancing during the event. Ask if you should bring anything for you and others guests attending with you, i.e. masks, hand sanitizer or tissues. Suggest bringing individually wrapped plasticware for others.

Tips for traveling to see loved ones:

- Wear your mask to keep your mouth and nose covered when in public places.
- Avoid close contact by staying at least six feet apart from others not in your household.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. When not possible, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
Staying home this year? Options to keep in touch with friends and family:

- Emails, texts and phone calls are top of mind when staying in touch this time of year. Consider reaching out to someone you haven’t talked with for a while. We all enjoy hearing a friendly voice during this pandemic.
- Send holiday cards. Who doesn’t love getting something unexpected in the mail? Design your own cards with a family photo, drawing or the infamous holiday letter to update everyone with your happenings.
- Connect through Facetime on your phone or use a computer software program, such as Skype or Zoom, that allows virtual gatherings. Even a few minutes can brighten someone’s day. Remember the elderly in other ways, as most are not into virtual visits!

Family Gatherings

- If it is hard being unable to visit the homes of your family members or to have dinner together, whether it’s a holiday or just a weekly visit. Although social distancing is keeping us home, you can creatively recreate family dinners (even if you aren’t all in the same house or state!) with the help of technology and the power of your senses.
- The most important thing to do is schedule a time for your virtual family dinner that works for your family members. The next step is a little tricky, because to recreate the atmosphere of eating together, you want to identify a meal that everyone is able to make some variation in their own homes. At the scheduled family dinner time, you and your family can sit down to the “same” meal while video chatting or talking to each other on the phone. You may not be able to be right next to them, but you can still catch up and feel like you are all sitting at the same table.

Hang Outs With Friends

Going out to eat with friends or doing an activity together may not be feasible at the moment but that doesn’t mean you can’t enjoy some of those favorite activities together while keeping apart.

MOVIES

- If watching movies together was a favorite pastime, set up a video chat on your phone or computer and talk to each other while watching the same video or TV show on streaming services. May not be the same as going to the theater but enjoy some popcorn and have fun talking about the characters in the movie or laughing at the same jokes.

GAMING

- Video chats can also make online gaming more fun. Some video games allow you to create online rooms to play with friends. By setting up a video chat room ahead of time, you can race your friends without being in the same room.
- This is feasible for games on many different consoles and on the computer. You might even find a new game that you can all play together while safely in your own homes.

Cruisin to Christmas theme for annual Christmas Parade

The parade will be held along Main Street. It begins at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1 with the theme, “Cruisin’ to Christmas.” As planning is finalized, more details will be announced for the public to participate in this family tradition. If interested in having an entry in the parade, please email your contact information to joplinchristmasparade@freemanhealth.com. Questions should be directed to Freeman Health Systems, coordinator of the event, at 417-347-3962.
Citizens input is part of the discussion for Joplin’s Trajectory

What is Joplin’s trajectory? If you are like me and love this community, you have probably asked yourself this question. As a community, what path is Joplin following and what forces are moving us along that path? Is our community’s trajectory one that points us to prosperity? Are we on a path to enhancing the quality of life for residents? Are the forces in our community creating more opportunity? Where are we going as a community?

These are very important questions that I cannot answer by myself or can be answered by any one person. To identify a community’s trajectory, we must get feedback from the community itself. You may recall that in the past newsletter I launched my “Listening Tour” asking five questions. I appreciate the 1,400+ people who responded.

This input is valuable for the City of Joplin to address the community issues and point the City’s trajectory toward goals and aspirations that yield positive improvement. As City Manager, I am surrounded by my fellow coworkers, and the people who call it home, who want this community to thrive. We want to do more for the community. We are led by a Mayor and Council who want us to provide exceptional service.

Through the survey, I am also learning what is important to you. I’m working to compile this significant data in a report to be presented to our Mayor and Council. As elected leaders, using your feedback as a foundational tool, they will discuss priorities and resources as they plot the trajectory for the City of Joplin. This will occur towards the end of 2020, with results helping to develop a plan to move Joplin forward.

Let’s talk about force. When thinking about the community trajectory, force is what is required to get to the end point. With less force, less distance is traveled, or in this case less success. You are the force. We need to rally as a community, to do something special, to change our trajectory for the good. We need community unity, to band together in a collaborative manner with an intentional focus on our community’s future. This is easy for Joplin as evident by the overwhelming response to the Joplin tornado in 2011. Together, banded together, we are a greater force. Unfortunately, in these current times, our community seems divided about a great number of issues. We are in our corners because of the pandemic, we are in our corners because of political beliefs, we are in our corners because of cultural differences. If we don’t come together, it will alter the trajectory for our community. We shouldn’t need a crisis to unite us for improvement. We can unite right now, and together we can make Joplin better. Together in spirit and desire, we can identify where we need to be.

Please watch for more announcements about what we’ve learned in the Listening Survey....

For Joplin,
Nick Edwards
City Manager
Joplin Public Library’s Rosemary Titus Reynold’s Children’s Department staff are working hard to create a fun, outdoor offering for fall. A StoryWalk® is soon to be making an appearance in the outdoor area around the Library and provides an innovative way for families to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As children and families stroll along the path, they are directed to the next page in the story.

The library’s StoryWalks® will feature the fun, Halloween-themed picture book The Ghosts Went Floating by Kim Norman and Jay Fleck. StoryWalks® have been installed in 50 states and 12 countries including, Germany, Canada, England, Bermuda, Russia, Malaysia, Pakistan and South Korea!

Staff plan to install the Storywalk the week of October 26, and families can start enjoying it right away. For more details contact the Children’s Department of the Joplin Public Library at 417-623-7953.

Joplin Parks and Recreation is starting a new holiday tradition this winter with a Holiday Tree Trail! Citizens young and old will enjoy a display of brightly decorated Christmas trees along the trail at Mercy Park from November 24 through January 1.

Guests are invited to walk the trail, enjoy the decorations, and attend two special Holiday Tree Trail events in December. These winter activities will be great to share with friends and families. Due to the coronavirus, we do encourage social distancing when encountering other groups along the trail.

The kickoff event for the Holiday Tree Trail will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, November 24. Two additional events featuring holiday movies, a children’s Christmas mini-parade, and other fun activities are being planned for December 5 and December 12. Additional details will be released closer to the date by Joplin Parks and Recreation. The trail will be open every day from November 24 through January 1 during park hours, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Tree sponsorships for the Holiday Tree Trail are available. It is a unique opportunity for area businesses, organizations, and groups to highlight their mission and services in a highly visible area during the holidays.

For more information about the event or tree sponsorship, please call Joplin Parks and Recreation at 417-625-4750 or email parks@joplinmo.org.

Following last year’s Public Transit analysis, the City will adjust the public transportation system to meet initial needs identified by residents. As part of the short-term plan, a Sunshine Lamp Trolley stop will be added at Ozark Center, located in the southeast portion of the service area.

“We heard from hundreds of citizens through public meetings and surveys and there was strong voice for the trolley to stop at Ozark Center,” said Robert Lolley, Coordinator of Joplin Public Transit. “This is something that we can do now to better serve our citizens, while we continue to look at the mid and long-term goals for Joplin’s public transportation.”

Lolley anticipates the Ozark Center stop on the Green Route being added by November 2 of this year. Another change along the Green Route will be to remove the stop at Sam’s Club. “Sam’s Club may seem to be a popular stop, but residents indicated that they don’t use the trolley for this location due to difficulty of traveling with the quantities generally purchased here,” he said.

On the Red Route, the stop originally located at the Price Cutter stop near 18th and Maiden Lane has been relocated to Maiden Lane and 17th Street.

Mid-term and long-term plans propose recommendations for Joplin to have a transfer facility that serves as the hub to the system. Routes would be added to cover the different geographic areas within a 30-minute timeframe, and riders could then transfer at the main facility to reach their destination.

These plans were presented to City Council who indicated their support. This will allow the City to begin working on preliminary steps to move toward this goal.

City Hall windows will be decorated once again for the holiday season, however there will not be group unveiling this year. Instead, the City’s windows will be available for viewing starting Thursday, November 19. This is the start date of the Downtown Joplin Alliance (DJA) Holiday Window Display event. Downtown merchants will display holiday decorations in their windows for the public to enjoy. There will be an online voting platform for favorites in various categories.

DJA will also have other activities and events on Thursday, November 19, to kick off the season. It will be a great time to shop, eat and play downtown. Merchants will be open late with special discounts, a pop-up food truck lot, and axe throwing or other activities to wrap up the evening.

Ballots will be available by scanning QR codes on posters at each location and on the Downtown Joplin Alliance Facebook page. Deadline to vote is December 13, and this year’s winners will be announced at 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 22 at City Hall. Downtown windows will be available for viewing through Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021.

For more information, contact the Downtown Joplin Alliance at 417-501-9649 or info@downtownjoplin.com.
Interested in helping your community? Serving on a City of Joplin board or commission is a way that citizens can provide input on the policies that shape their government and their city. Board members and commissioners generally serve as unpaid volunteers, but the rewards can be gratifying, including meeting other residents with similar interests, learning about the city, and helping shape the community’s future.

The City has over 20 organizations in which citizens may serve. Each board/commission represents a specific area of City government, and citizens may designate which board(s)/commission(s) they are applying to offer their service. These groups serve in diverse roles, including assessing needs; review of plans and policies; making recommendations to City departments and providing guidance on projects and programs.

Joplin citizens may submit applications to serve anytime during the year. Applicants must be a registered voter of the State of Missouri. Some boards may have specific requirements for its members. The City Council makes appointments to these organizations semi-annually or on an “as needed” basis. A full listing of the boards and commissions is available on the City’s website, www.joplinmo.org.

Those interested serving on City Boards and Commissions may apply through the City’s website or by email at bgollthof@joplinmo.org. For more information, contact the City Clerk’s office at 417-624-0820, ext. 220 or 221.

Currently, the City Council is seeking applicants to fill the following board openings:

**BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:**
- 5-year term;
- meets the third Friday of each month at 11 a.m. at City Hall.

This quasi-judicial board grants variances from the strict letter of the law as written in the Zoning Code, Subdivision Regulations, Historic Preservation Ordinance, Sign Code, Mobile Home Code, Flood Plain Management Code, and decides appeals to the decisions of the Chief Building Official or City Planner.

**CITY TREE BOARD:**
- 3-year term;
- meets the fourth Tuesday of every other month at 5:30 p.m. at the Athletic Complex.

The board’s role is to promote and protect the public health, safety and general welfare by providing for the regulation of the planting, maintenance and removal of trees, shrubs and other plants within the City of Joplin. It is also to manage Joplin’s community forest in a strong, healthy condition for today and the future.

**SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMISSION:**
- 3-year term;
- meets on call, once per quarter at City Hall.

The purpose of the board is to confer and advise the Council and the Administration on all matters concerning procedures or practices that involve the collection, storage and disposal of solid waste generated within the city limits of Joplin.

**TRAFFIC COMMISSION:**
- 3-year term;
- meets second Thursday of odd numbered months at 6 pm at City Hall;

This Board is to make recommendations to the City Council regarding traffic matters, such as speed limits, placement of traffic signals, parking or removal of parking along City Streets, traffic flow on City Streets, placement of stop signs, etc.
Flu vaccine: important tool to good health this winter

Unfortunately, the flu is a common illness this time of year. Both the flu and Covid-19 may be more severe in the elderly and those with underlying conditions, but the flu also affects children particularly hard, and is easily spread in schools.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. Common symptoms include fever, headache, muscle or body aches, feeling tired, cough, sore throat, and a runny or stuffy nose. While some symptoms mimic the common cold, it is different from a cold. In most cases, the flu causes mild to moderate illness, but it can lead to severe illness, and complications can lead to death.

People with the flu can spread the virus before, during, and after they are sick. Flu is spread mainly by droplets made when people who have the flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Viruses can also spread on surfaces, but this is less common.

The flu generally peaks in Missouri from December through February. Everyone six months of age and older should get a flu vaccine every season. Because it takes about two weeks before antibodies build up in your system to protect you from the flu, it is important to receive your vaccine prior to flu season (October-May). Do not wait to get immunized against the flu!

You have many options to obtain a flu vaccination. Many physician offices, pharmacies, and health departments offer the flu vaccine, and many insurance companies pay for the injection. The Joplin City Health Department, 321 E. 4th St., carries influenza vaccine for the uninsured, Medicaid, and many insurances. City residents may call us at 417-623-6122 to see if you qualify through your insurance and can then schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine.
Leaf Pick-Up service begins Monday, Nov 30

The City of Joplin will start the annual residential leaf pick up program on November 30, (the first Monday after Thanksgiving), weather permitting. The City picks up the leaves to help citizens with this seasonal chore of removing leaves from their property. This also keeps leaves from collecting around the storm drains which can cause flooding.

Residents are reminded to rake their leaves to the curb, and not to bag them. No tree limbs, brush or rocks should be included in the piles. Leaves should not be raked into the street, as they may clog the storm drains, and it could cause the City’s street sweeping truck to bypass that area. Please do not place leaf piles over water meters (manhole covers). Doing so may cause Missouri-American Water to estimate your water usage, instead of recording the exact amount for billing purposes.

To address all areas of Joplin, the City utilizes two crews which start in outlying areas and work their way toward the center of Joplin. As the crews work in opposite areas, they move toward the middle of town to complete the program. To help residents know the general order of neighborhood locations, the City has created a map with neighborhood sections numbered indicating the order of the crews’ work areas. The map can be found on the City’s website at www.joplinmo.org/LeafPickup19. Map areas labeled S1 through S5 are the areas the Streets crews will be working. Neighborhoods marked P1 through P5 identifies the Parks crew’s areas. Crews will move through these areas in sequence.

The first neighborhoods that Streets crews will be working is the Silver Creek, Highlands, and Woodland Hills areas (S1). The Parks crew begins south of 32nd Street and west of Main Street (P1). Crews will progress through the sections in chronological order until all of the City has been canvassed. Weather permitting, this collection could take at least one month or longer.

For more information call 624-0820 ext. 501 or 566, or the Parks Department at 627-8879.

Iris gardens expected to add beauty in and around Joplin next spring

Next spring, you should see many gardens full of these in our community, including our City parks, Joplin Schools and both hospitals in Joplin. We appreciate the Iris Committee from the Joplin Celebrations Commission for their work to beautify Joplin. This committee is encouraging Iris gardens throughout the city including residential areas as part of the Commission’s focus to celebrate upcoming events recognizing significant anniversaries of our city, state and nation. These include:

- Missouri Bicentennial (200th) - August 10, 2021
- City of Joplin Sesquicentennial (150th) - March 23, 2023
- United States of America Sestercentennial (250th) - July 4, 2026
- Route 66 Centennial (100th) - November 11, 2026

Members of the Tri-State Iris Society provided many of the iris rhizomes being planted in the community, along with area Master Gardeners offering their knowledge and expertise in future planting projects and public education programs about the Iris.

Did you know the Iris is Joplin’s official flower?

Robert Balek, horticulture specialist with MU Extension Office, instructs preschoolers from Joplin Early Childhood Center in planting rhizomes. (photo courtesy: Patrick Tuttle)

A couple of preschoolers take care in covering their rhizome with dirt. (photo courtesy: Lynn Onstot)

Good things are happening in Joplin! The best is yet to bloom!
Building a fence? Please contact the City for permit and guidelines

Before building a fence, citizens need to contact the Community Development and Planning department to complete a Fence Permit Application. When submitting this request, City staff will provide the guidelines necessary for the specific type of project. Fences are allowed in most situations, however there are height and building material requirements depending on the type of fencing and its location.

Residential fences have placement instructions in order not to create a traffic hazard by blocking sightlines, and also not to impede the neighborhood in some fashion. Security and commercial fencing also have regulations that the builder must follow.

By contacting the City for this information, citizens will be equipped to build a proper structure for their type of fence and avoid pitfalls of a code violation. Information about fences can be found in Sec. 54-81 of the City’s Code of Ordinance on the City’s website, www.joplinmo.org

For more information, contact the Planning department at 417-624-0820, ext. 511.

Survey set up to hear about citizens’ water drainage problems

The City is currently updating their stormwater management master plan and are asking citizens to provide their input about water drainage around their homes and neighborhoods.

The stormwater plan evaluates the performance capability and deficiencies of the City’s existing major drainage system. Some of the key goals are to identify infrastructure deficiencies, drainage and flooding concerns, and erosion or water quality issues within the City.

In addition to three public meetings, City staff has developed a Flood Assessment Questionnaire to help citizens describe the nature of the drainage issue experienced. It can be found online at www.joplinmo.org/flood-survey. Citizens have until November 1 to provide their information.

“We would like to hear from our citizens about any stormwater problems they may have had,” said Steven Martinez, stormwater engineer for the City. “By gathering this information, it helps us identify areas to develop a thorough stormwater master plan.”