

Deadline September 20th: For print in the November 2005 edition

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Oh, Glorious Lights!

View a spectacle of spectacular lights to help celebrate the holiday season with all that's colorful and bright! Enjoy a trip to the marvelous and delightful Festival of Trees in Methuen, MA.

Beginning in 1994, this annual event takes place at the Valley Office Park on Route 113 off of exit 46 on Route 93 and began as a way for the city of Methuen to raise funds to maintain or restore the city's monuments and other historic landmarks.

The festival opens with its grand, premiere evening on November 18th where special tickets are required for the first night festivities from 7:00 – 10:00 p.m. (\$30.00/person before November 1st and \$35.00/person after November 1st). Premiere Night tickets can be obtained by calling (978) 685-8878 and leaving your contact information or by sending a check (payable to: Methuen Festival of Trees) to P.O. Box 14, Methuen, MA 01844. If you can't make the premiere, general admission from November 19th through the festival's end on December 3rd is \$6.00/person (children age 12 and younger are admitted for free, senior citizens for \$4.00).

Nearly 200 trees are donated and decorated by area businesses, individuals, organizations, and school and youth groups and done so in the most incredible ways, each one with their own charm. The theme is often a reflection of the association donating the tree. For instance, you may find hair dryer, comb and brush ornaments dangling from a tree donated by a hair and beauty salon. You may even find a gift certificate or two for services snuggled amongst a tree branch as well, for example for a free haircut, massage or manicure. You may spot a tree with mini-gym equipment decorations adorning it, donated by a local gym along with a free one year membership or personal trainer session.

Last year, there was a tree adorned with Red Sox paraphernalia to honor the World Series Champions. Trees done up in traditional-style décor are also on display for enjoying those memories of long ago, childhood, holiday celebrations. The Festival of Trees organization is always interested in tree donations, so if you have a tree that you'd like to donate for the raffle, you can review donation information on their website at www.methuenfestivaloftrees.com.

Purchase raffle tickets on-site when you visit and enter a chance to win one of your favorite trees. As you walk among the rows and rows of these colorful specimens, drop a raffle ticket into the box for that particular tree and, on December 3rd, the trees are raffled off to those that have entered to win one of these specially decorated, themed trees. If you are a winner in this lottery, you can pick up your tree and enjoy it for the holiday season (guidelines for picking up your prize are listed on the Festival of Trees website at www.methuenfestivaloftrees.com/FAQ.htm).

Adults may want to check out the auction area of the festival. Donations valued at \$100.00 and under, are bid on through the silent auction and items valued at over \$100.00, are publicly auctioned live on December 2nd.

If you prefer a smaller tree, you will find miniature trees on display, too. Miniature trees are smaller than 16 inches, and they are part of a special silent auction. They will be won by the highest bidder on Saturday evening, December 3rd.

Aside from the tree raffling and auctions, children's events are a part of the event and, if your family celebrates Christmas, then you may want to make a note that Santa Claus visits the festival on the weekend after Thanksgiving. The opportunity for digital photographs of your child with Santa will be available. Children will also enjoy a scavenger hunt and storytellers. Area individuals and musical groups also provide entertainment some evenings.

For more detailed information about the festival, remember to visit www.methuenfestivaloftrees.com. The website also provides information with how much funding was raised and which projects that funding was able to support within the community. Happy Holidays!

Graphics: Photos Courtesy of Meghan Mazella/John Hollins

Nestled Winter Scene: winter_scene.jpg

Ornaments: bulb_lights.jpg

Lighted Trees: lighted_trees.jpg