

November 15, 2020

Dear

Because you requested and received a visit from our Park Ridge Santa in 2019, you are receiving this letter regarding how the visit this year must be different because of the Covid pandemic which is so prevalent in our State of Wisconsin and Portage County.

First, however, this is a brief history of Santa's annual visits as written in the booklet "**A History – of sorts – of the Early Times**" compiled by Char Woods.

*"It began when the Garden Club asked the board if the village would pay for candy for Santa to give to the children. If so, the club would make small net stocking bags and fill them. The board willingly agreed. The bags were filled judiciously, piece by piece, so each child would receive no more, no less than another; so no questions would arise among them to who had been naughty and who had been nice the past year. Later the candy was measured by the cupful and plastic bags replaced the net bags which had had a tendency to come apart at the seams."*

*"The first Santa was George Lovejoy. Wearing the Santa suit purchased in 1940, he made the rounds in a sleigh drawn by a horse with bells a-jingling. Through the years there has always been a volunteer to play Santa."*

Since 1953 the Park Ridge Fire Department volunteers have continued this tradition and are willing to do so again this year, which will be the 80<sup>th</sup> year of Santa's visits. This will be the 10<sup>th</sup> year of my serving as volunteer Chief Elf. But ... obviously the pandemic will necessitate changes. I have been in contact with the Portage County Health Department and feel that the following will be in the best health interests of all participants: children, parents, and Santa.

Santa will arrive at homes via fire truck, with lights and the siren sounding. However, **children are asked to stay inside their homes**, greeting Santa through the front door or through closed windows. **There will be no interior visits by Santa.** He will leave a package for each child **on the porch** which the children can retrieve as Santa goes on down his route.

If you wish Santa to come by your home on December 14<sup>th</sup>, please fill out the enclosed registration form and return it to me by December 7<sup>th</sup> so I can make the necessary preparations. I realize that some of you are grandparents who have children visit you especially for Santa's visit and you may not wish to have them come this year. We understand your concern. We'll hope that Christmas 2021 brings us back to "normal" and Santa can visit them once again.

To conclude, I ask each of you who receives this letter to help us by letting me know if you have new neighbors with small children who have moved in since last Christmas. I will be happy to contact them individually about this tradition.

My second request is your reaction (**pro or con**) to something that those of us involved in this project have been contemplating for the last couple of years. Since 1940, children 12 years and younger have been visited by Santa. But with the vastly changing technology our children are exposed to, should this age be lowered to 10 years of age? Your input will be considered for 2021 visits. Just drop your ideas on the reverse side of the registration form or email them to me at [dneuendorf@charter.net](mailto:dneuendorf@charter.net).

Meanwhile, stay healthy, stay safe, and please take care to wear a mask when out in public.

Chief Elf Gert Neuendorf

715-344-7906