



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Ozark National Scenic Riverways

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Ozark National Scenic Riverways News Release

For Immediate Release

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Ozark National Scenic Riverways Host Successful *An Ozark Christmas* Event for the Van Buren Elementary Third Graders

Van Buren, MO – Christmas is a favorite time of year for many people. The smell of freshly baked cookies, snowflakes falling softly to the ground and twinkling lights around every corner remind us of special memories of years past. In honor of the season and to celebrate Ozark traditions and culture, Ozark National Scenic Riverways was pleased to host *An Ozark Christmas for the Van Buren Elementary third grade students*, Sunday, December 11th, 2011.

The holiday season was kicked off with the official lighting of the park Christmas tree by Acting Superintendent Russ Runge. Many folks gathered to enjoy favorite Christmas carols performed by the Van Buren third grade students, stories and a visit from jolly Ol' Saint Nick.

Preparations for the event began weeks ago as the Van Buren third graders studied past Ozark Christmas traditions with their teachers and Park Ranger, Cathy Runge. After gaining an appreciation of their unique Ozark heritage, the students created their own traditional Ozark Christmas tin-punched ornaments to decorate the tree. The students also wrote essays about their own personal Ozark Christmas traditions and the winning essays received U. S. Savings Bonds. The winners of the Essay Contest were Katlyn Sutton (1st place), Holden Oesch (2nd place), Jessica Laughlin (3rd place) and Lani Black (Honorable Mention).

The event was a success with more than 83 students and their families, Van Buren School faculty, and National Park Service employees attending. A special thank-you goes to the third grade teachers, Amy Jackson and Susan Dunn, Music teacher David Russell, Art teacher Susan Francis

and especially to the third grade students for their hard work and dedication in making this event memorable.

For more information, phone (573) 323-4236 during business hours Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm or visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/ozar. Ozark National Scenic Riverways preserves the free-flowing Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, the surrounding natural resources, and the unique cultural heritage of the Ozark people.



Pictured: Jolly Ol' St. Nick Himself Visits with the Van Buren Third Graders

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