

Thanksgiving dinner costs climb this year

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St. Cloud Times

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2026 | SCTIMES.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

WINTERWALK FESTIVAL

Santa heading to St. Joseph on a semi

James Kling
St. Cloud Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ST. JOSEPH, Minn. — Santa and Mrs. Claus are riding into Bad Habit Brewery in St. Joseph on a semitruck.

They'll be holding court at the brewery from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4.

Santa and the Mrs. will be a part of the annual JoeTown WinterWalk Festival, which will take place in downtown St. Joseph.

The truck's flat bed will be adorned with Christmas decorations, St. Joseph Mayor Adam Scepaniak said.

College Avenue will be closed from West Minnesota Street to West Ash Street from around 3 to 9 p.m. to accommodate the tractor-trailer. The city council approved the road closure for the time period during its meeting Nov. 16.

Scepaniak said families who want to meet Santa will be able to go to Bad Habit Brewing Company, where Santa will be dropped off.

Throughout the event, children can also drop off letters to Santa into the Santa Mailbox at W | R Home Company.

WinterWalk Festival will have a few other events. The festival will light up the Christmas tree, and shops and volunteers will play live music and have food and drink available. The tree is expected to be lit at around 7 p.m.

Shop Small Saturday in Joetown

St. Joseph is also planning another event for the holiday season — the Shop Small Saturday in Joetown. The small shop crawl celebration is planned for 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 28 — national Small Business Saturday.

Sixteen local businesses are participating, including Milk & Honey Ciders, The House & Food Tap, Art & Heritage Place, Sal's Bar & Grill, American Legion, W|R Home and Clothing Company, White Peony Boutique, MN Street Market, Bad Habit, Jupiter Moon, Wandering Cow, La Playette Bar, Krewe Restaurant, Flour & Flower, Obbink Distilling and Bruno Press.

'CHRISTMAS CAROL,' LIGHTS, MUSIC



A mailbox for letters to Santa, with a promise for a return letter, is placed at the curb of the home on the 1100 block of 10th Ave. N. Wednesday Dec. 9, 2020, in Sauk Rapids. DAVE SCHWARZ/DSCHWARZ@STCLOUDTIMES.COM

Guide to holiday events in central Minnesota

A.J. Kaufman
Special to the St. Cloud Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

With the holiday season in full swing, there's an annual array of events across central Minnesota that are designed for many interests.

Here is a list of some of the more prominent ones to keep on the calendar:

The Paramount Center for the Arts presents the legendary "A Christmas Carol" from Nov. 20 through Dec. 6. With multiple performances in downtown St. Cloud, the showings mainly run at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays and 2 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. There will be a 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 5 show as well.

The Great River Resonance Handbell Concert Carols of Many Nations takes place at 2 p.m. Nov. 22 inside Salem Lutheran Church.

Pioneer Place on Fifth in downtown St. Cloud hosts several shows, including Happy Ha-Ha-Ha-lidays: A Night of Comedy and Music! Starring Jason Schommer & Michael Shynes, 7:30 p.m. Nov. 25

Over at Blackberry Ridge Golf Club in Sartell, you can visit The North Pole at Blackberry Ridge starting at

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Ahead of the holidays, Copper Pony decorates and restocks its decor items and gifts to become a go-to spot for Christmas shopping. TEAGAN KING/ST. CLOUD TIMES

Mayo Clinic under fire for low level of charity care

Alyssa Chen
MINNESOTA REFORMER

Mayo Clinic's flagship Rochester hospital ranked last in the nation in how much it gave in financial assistance relative to how much it received in tax breaks in 2023, according to a new analysis from Massachusetts-based think tank The Lown Institute.

Nonprofit hospitals are required to provide charity care — financial assistance for people who can't pay for their care — and other community health programs in exchange for their tax-exempt status, a trade that health policy experts have said is hard to monitor.

The think tank analyzed 2023 tax data for around 3,000 hospitals across the country, along with Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services hospital cost reports and local property assessments, to calculate the difference between how much hospitals received in tax breaks and how much they spent on charity care and other community investments.

The report found that Mayo Clinic's Rochester hospital received $366 million more in tax breaks than it gave in charity care. The second worst offender in the state, HealthPartners' Methodist Hospital in St. Louis Park, had a far smaller difference: $21 million. Minnesota hospitals altogether received $591 million more in tax breaks than they gave in charity care.

Half of the country's nonprofit hospitals received more in tax breaks than they give in charity care, according to the report.

A Mayo Clinic spokesperson disputed the findings, calling The Lown Institute's methodology "deeply flawed." The analysis does not count the significant investments Mayo Clinic makes as a world-renowned research institution into developing new treatments and training the next generation of physicians.

"The methodology excludes important categories of Community Benefit identified by the IRS, including Medicaid shortfall, medical research and health professions education," the statement reads.

The Minnesota Attorney General's Office began investigating Mayo Clinic in 2022 after reports in the *Rochester*

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Volume 166 | No. 136
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