

# Prairie Rose Center

Community Action Partnership | 202 East Villard | 701-227-0131 |

## Celebrating December

### Safe Toys and Gifts Month

#### National Tie Month

#### Computer Science

#### Education Week

*December 9–15*

#### Eat a Red Apple Day

*December 1*

#### Sacher Torte Day

*December 5*

#### Pearl Harbor

#### Remembrance Day

*December 7*

#### Weary Willie Day

*December 9*

#### Cocoa Day

*December 13*

#### Cat Herders Day

*December 15*

#### Eggnog Day

*December 24*

#### Christmas Day

*December 25*

## Timeless Treasures

Old-fashioned toys have a timeless charm that still brings joy during the holiday season. These classic playthings remind us that fun doesn't need to be high-tech to be memorable. Take the Slinky, for example. Invented in the 1940s by a mechanical engineer, this simple metal spring became an instant hit. Kids marveled as it "walked" down stairs. Over 300 million Slinkys have been sold since.

Then there's the yo-yo, which dates back to ancient Greece. The modern version we know today gained popularity in the 1920s. Yo-yos were a must-have for kids learning tricks like "Walk the Dog" and "Around the World." They remain a nostalgic favorite and are often found in Christmas stockings.

Another beloved toy is the Etch A Sketch, introduced in 1960. This magical drawing board uses knobs to create pictures with aluminum powder. It sold over 600,000 units during its first Christmas season. The Etch A Sketch became a staple under the Christmas tree, offering endless creativity without the need for batteries.

No list of classic toys would be complete without the beloved jack-in-the-box. Originating in the 16th century, this whimsical toy has delighted children for centuries. The thrill of turning the crank and waiting for the cheerful pop of a clown or other character never gets old—a perfect reminder that sometimes the most delightful toys are the ones that make us smile with anticipation.

And who could forget Lincoln Logs? These wooden building sets were created in 1916 by John Lloyd Wright, the son of renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. This open-ended toy allowed children to build miniature log cabins and other structures. The sets are still cherished for their simplicity and the way they spark the imagination.

These toys remind us that sometimes the simplest playthings bring the most joy. Consider adding a few of these timeless classics to your holiday traditions. Perhaps you even have some stored away in an attic. They're sure to bring smiles, just as they have for generations.

## The Demo Heard 'Round the World



Some call it the day that launched the personal computing revolution. Others call it the “Mother of All Demos.” On December 9, 1968, a computer engineer named Douglas Engelbart

made a presentation to an audience of 1,000 at the San Francisco Convention Center. During this presentation, Engelbart foresaw the future of computing.

In 1968, computers were considered by many to be little more than fancy calculators, but Engelbart and a group of 17 other researchers had been working since 1962 at the Stanford Research Institute in Menlo Park, California, to prove that computers were much more than that. Computers, they believed, could augment human intelligence: using a computer, we could work smarter and faster, thereby dramatically increasing our ability to do good in the world.

During the 100-minute presentation, Engelbart presented the first computer mouse, so called because of the long cord resembling a mouse's tail. He used the mouse to move a cursor around a screen, highlight words, and resize windows. A video of Engelbart himself appeared on half of the screen, while the other half displayed the computer's working output. Soon after, Engelbart's colleagues appeared on-screen to converse and help modify the document. The team was effectively demonstrating the first collaborative remote videoconference.

While we take such technological innovations for granted today, in 1968, such a presentation was mind-blowing. Personal computers would not even become accessible to the public for another 12 years. Furthermore, the interface Engelbart first described on December 9, 1968, is still the basic computer interface we use today. Before his presentation, some believed Engelbart to be a “crackpot.” Afterward, he was hailed as a visionary and genius.

## Weather Watchers

The first Saturday of December is Skywarn Recognition Day, a day of appreciation for over 350,000 volunteer storm spotters. These spotters provide timely and accurate reports of wind, hail, flash floods, lightning, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Skywarn volunteers are often the first to signal warnings of severe weather as it approaches.

Anyone can be a Skywarn weather spotter. Local National Weather Service offices provide training in storm structures and development, weather safety, and how to report severe weather information. These spotters are a gift to their communities, giving them time to prepare for whatever Mother Nature brings.

## Calling All Bingo Lovers

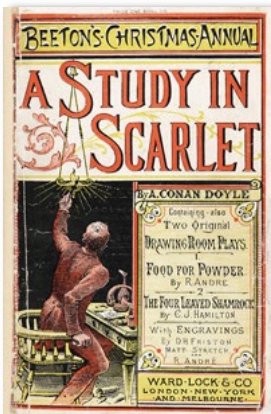


Bingo is celebrated throughout December in church halls and community centers because December is Bingo Month. The game dates all the way back to 1530, when Italians played a game called *Lo Gioco del Lotto d'Italia*. Some even say that this game was used to fight government corruption.

Instead of winning a pot of money, those holding winning numbers were elected as local leaders.

The French first introduced a playing card full of numbers. Then in the 1800s, the Germans used the game as a tool to teach children math and spelling. It first appeared in America in 1929 at a carnival near Atlanta, Georgia, where it was called “Beano.” When an excited winner shouted out the word *bingo* by mistake, an entrepreneur named Edwin S. Lowe overheard the faux pas, renamed the game, and employed a Columbia University mathematician named Carl Leffler to create 6,000 randomly numbered bingo cards. Leffler purportedly went insane from the task. A Catholic priest asked Lowe to show him the game as a way of raising money for the church. Bingo has been a church hall mainstay ever since.

## From Beeton to Baker Street



Samuel Orchard Beeton, an English publisher from the 1800s, was best known for publishing his wife's book, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*, a guide for keeping house in Victorian England. Beeton went on to launch a new magazine that came out only once a year, called *Beeton's Christmas*

*Annual*. His 1887 issue contained three stories, including a story by a writer named Arthur Conan Doyle titled "A Study in Scarlet," featuring a detective named Sherlock Holmes and his friend and assistant, Dr. Watson.

Doyle had not originally intended to become a writer of mystery stories. He studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh in his native Scotland. One of his professors, Dr. Joseph Bell, inspired him greatly with his amazing powers of deduction. It is said that the character of Sherlock Holmes is based on Dr. Bell.

Doyle moved to London to practice medicine, but work was slow, and he wrote in his free time. When "A Study in Scarlet" was first published, it did not garner much attention. However, as Doyle introduced more adventures, the public clamored for more Sherlock Holmes stories. Eventually Doyle quit medicine to become a full-time writer.

"A Study in Scarlet" is marvelous in that it shows the first meeting between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson and paints a full picture of Holmes' many eccentricities. It is also famous for being the first detective story to include a magnifying glass as a detective's tool. Only 11 complete copies of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* are known to exist, and copies in excellent condition are collectors' items worth more than \$100,000. Doyle would go on to write more than 50 Sherlock Holmes stories, and his famous detective would forever influence the future of the crime and mystery genre.

## Blessings by the Sea

While the northern hemisphere is bundling up for winter, in the southern hemisphere, Uruguayans are preparing for beach season. One of the great secrets of this South American country is that its coastline is one long, never-ending beach. In fact, Uruguay boasts some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, earning the nickname of the "Uruguayan Riviera."

Beach season unofficially opens every year on December 8, the Day of the Beaches, when local priests perform a "Blessing of the Waters." After the blessing, sailboat regattas and horseback-riding competitions are held. Then everyone begins a summer of frolicking in the surf.

## Cutting-Edge Fun



Nothing announces the arrival of the holiday season like the smell of freshly baked cookies. If you're looking to spruce up your baking this year, ditch the common round shape for some fun cookie cutters during Cookie Cutter Week, held the first week of December.

While evidence shows that ancient Egyptians created interesting molds for baking cakes, Queen Elizabeth I of England is said to have popularized the novelty of baking cookies in the shape of her guests. Gingerbread men and women soon became popular in bakeries across 17th-century England.

Today, you can find cookie cutters in every conceivable shape and size. Some manufacturers will even create custom cookie cutters. Some people enjoy collecting cookie cutters, and serious enthusiasts belong to the Cookie Cutters Collectors' Club (CCCC). In fact, it was the CCCC that originally conceived Cookie Cutter Week about 30 years ago. Members enjoy benefits such as a quarterly newsletter and an exclusive cutter designed to commemorate Cookie Cutter Week.



## Write On!



We live in a digital age where text messaging, Facebook, Instagram, and email are considered preferable ways of communicating with friends. These days, good old-fashioned letter writing is a lost art. December may be the perfect time to resurrect that art, for December is Write to a Friend Month, and December 7 is Letter Writing Day.

December presents a variety of opportunities for writing letters. The holiday season is often the one time a year we send holiday cards with updates about our family or events from the past year. And after all the holiday gift giving, there may be no better way to express thanks than by sending a handwritten thank-you card.

If you need some extra incentive to start your letter writing, consider buying some fun new stationery. You could also head to your local post office to pick out some unique stamps. If you want to get really fancy, join a calligraphy class to add an extra flourish to your letters, or add a dash of old-fashioned elegance by sealing your envelopes with a wax seal.

As long as you're writing, a letter could also prove the perfect vehicle for reconnecting with old friends. Receiving a letter in the mail is nice enough, but a letter from a childhood pal or an old flame? Thrilling!

Some shy away from writing to old friends out of the blue because it may feel awkward, but we must not forget that old friendships are valuable things. After all, a friendship is a shared history. What better way to reconnect with a friend than to fondly reminisce about those shared good times and to perhaps reflect on how you have grown? It is also important to realize that reconnecting via a handwritten letter does not necessarily mean you must make a long-term commitment. Sometimes a warm hello is sufficient and can stand well enough on its own.

## December Birthdays

If you were born between December 1–21, you are Sagittarius, the Archer. Archers are optimistic, energetic, generous, and honest. They enjoy exploration and keep an open mind during new encounters. Those born between December 22–31 are Capricorns, the Goat. Capricorns are the most stable and serious signs of the zodiac. Reliable, resourceful, and determined, they make excellent leaders and managers.

Lou Rawls (singer) – December 1, 1933  
 Louis Prima (singer) – December 7, 1910  
 Judi Dench (actress) – December 9, 1934  
 Connie Francis (singer) – December 12, 1938  
 J. Paul Getty (tycoon) – December 15, 1892  
 William Parry (explorer) – December 19, 1790  
 Ava Gardner (actress) – December 24, 1922  
 Ted Danson (actor) – December 29, 1947  
 Tiger Woods (golfer) – December 30, 1975

## Dice Day Roll Call



Dice may be the ultimate random number generators, but there is nothing random about the date of National Dice Day, which always falls on December 4. Some of the oldest known dice are more than 5,000 years old; they were part of a backgammon set from the historic Burnt City in Iran.

Why are dice sometimes called “bones”? In olden times, the *talus*, or ankle bones, of hooved animals, such as sheep and goats, were used as dice. Since then, the name *bones* stuck. The dots on dice are called *pips*, and the six sides of a die also have names: ace, deuce, trey, cater, cinque, and sice. Speaking of *die*, where did this term for a single-number cube come from? It comes from the Latin word *datum*, which means “something given or played.” On December 4, you can do both: give dice as a Dice Day gift and then “let ‘em roll” in your favorite game.