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At the Manger: A Great Way to Start the Christmas Season

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At the Manger: A Great Way to Start the Christmas Season

By Heidi Gauder

Looking for a free, indoor family event Thanksgiving weekend? After Thanksgiving turkey on Thursday and shopping on Friday, I bring the whole family to University of Dayton's At the Manger Open House the Saturday after Thanksgiving. This year's is from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 26, in the University of Dayton Roesch Library.

At the Manger: World Nativity Traditions is a free exhibit of Nativity sets from around the world. The Marian Library collection, which represents hundreds of countries and cultures, is a community treasure. Here are some of my favorite things about the Open House:

The Nativity sets are amazing. The variety of materials used to create the Nativity sets, the cultural traditions that are often included, and the countries represented make the exhibit even more special. The exhibit has been a wonderful way to talk with our son about how different countries observe and celebrate Christmas. Each set features a description of the country of origin and what some of the aesthetics, symbols or features signify.

The Seek and Find: This interactive game has been a hit over the years with my son. The brochure features photos of objects within the sets on display, creating a fun, semi-competitive race to find them all. From the time he could write numbers, he has had fun looking for and finding the baby Jesus, the animals, angels and other Nativity pieces listed in the brochures. Oh, and the prizes are great, too. The Seek and Find is available throughout the exhibition.

The children's activities: My son loves to "make stuff," and we have a lot of fun together, whether it's creating Christmas cards for special people or the other fantastic crafts and activities that have been offered over the years.

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This year, you can make a special Nativity magnet or a papel picado, a Mexican folk art banner, in addition to cards and coloring pages. Younger ones can spend time at the Arrange-a-Manger station, where they can play with Nativity figurines and sets.

Something for the football fan, too: Yes, the event is scheduled every year during the Ohio State-Michigan game. You can enjoy both! The library has a special multi-screen viewing room with college football games on for those that want to watch or pop in and check the score.

Bonus: Free parking, refreshments and live music make this an easy and festive event to attend.

Many families in the Dayton area have made the At the Manger Grand Open House a beloved tradition. Be part of this fun and free event this year! Visit the [exhibit website](#) and [see the Facebook event](#).

- Heidi Gauder, coordinator of research and instruction

At the Manger: World Nativity Traditions exhibits continue Nov. 26, 2016 – Jan. 8, 2017. Drawing from the Marian Library's collection of more than 3,000 Nativities, this year's exhibit explores the rich and original variety of Mexican nacimientos (Nativities); features an original 12-foot metal mobile of the Nativity made by local artists; and highlights the romantic Nativity culture of the Ore Mountains in eastern Germany.

Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday – Friday; 1 – 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Closed: Dec. 8; Dec. 23–26; Dec. 30–31; Jan. 1–2.