

LIFE AND PARENTING IN SOUTH WEST FRANCE

time out



IN THE SOUTH

CHRISTMAS 2014



ASSOCIATION DOMINIQUE

IN THE
SPOTLIGHT
new members

PYRENEES SKI RESORTS

SHORT STORY
christmas in the Ariège

CHARITY
PHOTOSHOOT

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS & RECIPES





President's Letter

I hope you've all had a great couple of months settling back into creche, school or weekly Tots activities. It's been a busy term at Tots with the Annual General Meeting; re-vamped Friday Meets; the Halloween party; and preparations for the Christmas party and nativity play well underway.

It's also been a busy time for welcoming new members, and we've had nearly 30 new members register with Tots since September. You can learn more about some of them in the New Members section later in this newsletter, but I wanted to say a warm welcome to you all and hope you're enjoying being part of our Tots family.

Many of our members travel back to their home countries to spend the holidays with family, so we wish you safe travels if you are going away; and a relaxing, fun-filled Christmas if you are staying close to home.

Christmas is always a busy time of year... there are decorations to go up; presents to buy and wrap; letters to Santa to write; and delicious food to shop for and prepare... so why not take 15 minutes to sit down with a cup of tea (or glass of mulled wine) and a mince pie, and read our Christmas Special newsletter. We hope you enjoy it!

*Best wishes
Catherine*

WHAT'S INSIDE

2	President's Letter	12	Association Dominique and the Tots & Co Spring Fair
3	Bumps to Babies!	16	Christmas in Ariege
4	In the Spotlight: New Members	18	A Belgian Christmas
7	Autumn Term Roundup	19	Festive Recipes
8	A Guide to the Pyrenean Ski Resorts	20	Christmas Crafts
11	Christmas Nativity	21	The Season for Goodwill

news



The Bumps to Babies group is thrilled to welcome a whole new crop of mini tots who have arrived since September!

Isla Marie Chahrour
Date of Birth: 06th September 2014
Weight: 4.05 kg

Roland Levi Trognon
Date of Birth: 15th September 2014
Weight: 3.6kg

Coraline Eve Waeteraere
Date of Birth: 23rd September 2014
Weight: 3.7kg

Cecilia Rowan Scottie Eady
Date of Birth: 24th September 2014
Weight: 3.54kg

Moritz Elliot Ohst
Date of Birth: 5th October 2014
Weight: 3.24kg

Alexander Ludovic Christopher Sheffield
Date of Birth: 7th October 2014
Weight: Just under 4kg

Elias Cixous
Date of Birth: 29th October 2014
Weight: 3.45kg



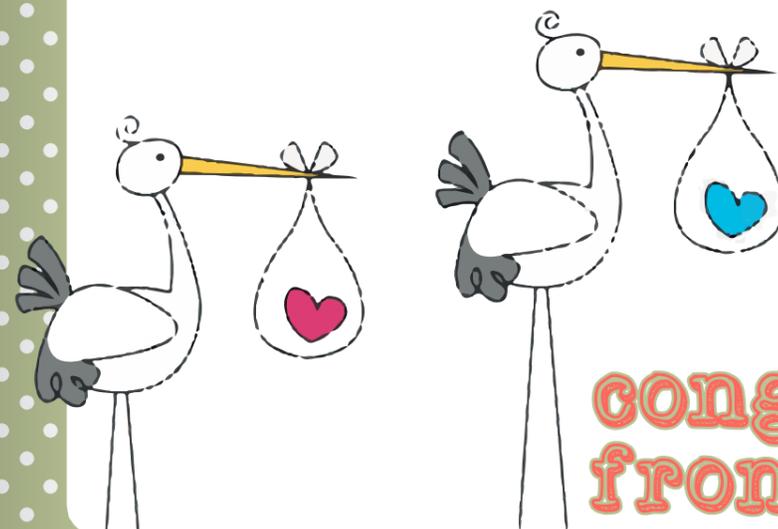
Owen Thomas Dier
Date of Birth: 31st October 2014
Weight: 3.88kg

Morgane Maria Velpry
Date of Birth: 2nd November 2014
Weight: 3.34kg

Lucy Christine Bordes-Carter
Date of Birth: 05 November 2014
Weight: 3.69kg

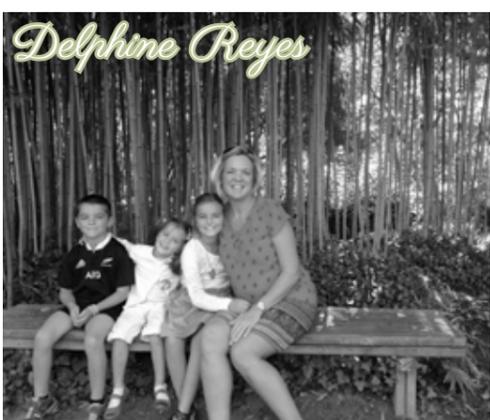
Honey Catherine Davis
Date of Birth: 26th November 2014
Weight: 3.4kg

Oscar Jude Alexander Philip
Date of Birth: 12th November 2014
Weight: 3.23kg



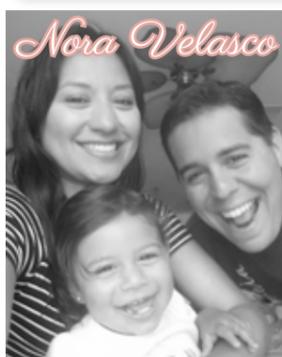
congratulations from all at Tots!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: NEW MEMBERS



Delphine Reyes

What do you miss most about your home country?
I'm French, married to Nigel, who is British from Gibraltar. We have 3 children: Carla 9, Rudy 6 and Noémie 4, and they will soon have another little brother! We've spent the past 3 years in New Zealand, in Auckland. Carla and Rudy learnt how to read and write in English over there. What they have enjoyed the most was all the outing we use to do during weekends. Noémie went to the Kindergarten and had lots of friends that she misses now. They still speak to each other in English when they play, my husband and myself would love to maintain their bilingualism as much as possible, that is why we think it's great to be able to join your community!



Nora Velasco

What did you do before Motherhood?
I used to work in a school as an assistant teacher for kindergarden and third grade. I loved my job working with children, they were so smart and loving. I also liked to go out with my husband to the cinema. I also went to school to study Medical and Community Interpreting, so I was able to work as a Spanish-English interpreter and help the Hispanic community in the United States. I used to exercise, go out with my friends, go out with my husband and sleep in on weekends! My life has changed a lot since Isabella was born and even more now that she is two years old, but I wouldn't change anything of what I have lived and learned with her. She means the world to me and I love her with all my heart. I love being her mommy and I thank God for giving me such a precious and loving daughter.



Alyson Austin

What do you do in your free time?
My son Moritz was born 5th October. In my freetime I try to cram in some yoga (which is very challenging as Moritz cries whenever he's put down), get to grips with my sewing machine, watch English crime drama, make smoothies with sneaky shots of coffee, and today I'm making a Christmas mobile out of sticks!



Pilar Gándara

How long have you been in Toulouse and how long will you stay?
We arrived in September 2013 escaping from the Irish rain and after many years living abroad we will be going to Madrid in August 2015 :)



Jenny Dalhuispen

What do you do in your free time?
I don't really have any at the moment as we've just had a baby but normally I enjoy running, volleyball, food & drinks with friends, and cuddles with the cats.

Our Spotlight page usually features 2 or 3 members, but with so many amazing new members (almost 30 since September), we thought we would ask each of them a question to get to know them a little better.

We send a warm welcome to all our new members and hope that you are enjoying the Tots activities and opportunities to meet existing members. If you need any information about Tots activities, then please contact our New Members Coordinator, Kirsty Bignell, or any committee member will also be happy to help.



Maya Toggi

What noticeable differences do you find between France and your home country?
It is quite difficult to define our "home country" because I am Italian, and my husband, Laurent, is French. The children were born in Sydney and have grown up in Singapore. The differences I find between France and Asia/Down-under are, as you can imagine, many! I miss the the school uniforms! I miss the practical, economic, "part of a team" feeling of that a school uniform has. The kids are a bit confused by the non-respect of some civic rules, which in Singapore was absolutely normal. My husband has just started to realise the difference between our quality of life there...and here... and is trying to KEEP CALM and CARRY ON!



Isabelle Dehghani

What did you do before Motherhood?
Apart from taking time for shopping/ reading peacefully/ and having a long bath? I used to work for the British Red Cross as Service Development Manager. I continued after the births of my 3 girls until we moved to France. I now work for the French Red Cross.



Adrienne LaBranche Tucker

What noticeable differences do you find between France and your home country?
I'm from the United States and most recently lived in central Illinois, where everything is very expansive. Parking, signage, vehicles, roads, product packaging, furniture, and the lifestyle are all so much bigger and more plush in the States. I have to leave my American expectations aside as I venture out in the French terrain. It has been a nice change of pace as we were living an unsustainable lifestyle in more ways than one in Illinois, but at times I do miss the ease in which I navigated the American society.



Emma Routaboul

What did you do before Motherhood?
I'm still working in the same job as I was before having my son Mathieu, who is 2.5 years old. I work in Aeronautics, in a German company in Toulouse. I'm working in customer support, dealing with airlines. Since having Mathieu, I've never been so eager to leave on time to be able to spend as much time as possible with him when I get home.



Ingrid Taylor

Tell us about your family
My family consists of me, my husband Dave and our son Drew who has just turned 2 today. I'm also 34 weeks pregnant with another little boy who's due to arrive in January. We live in a very small village in the Gers with our dog and two cats.



Inka Leiring

What noticeable differences do you find between France and your home country?
At the "goûter" at 4pm the french children are allowed to eat Biscuits and chocolate! As Franz is too small I am helping him!

What did you do before Motherhood?
I'm still working in the same job as I was before having my son Mathieu, who is 2.5 years old. I work in Aeronautics, in a German company in Toulouse. I'm working in customer support, dealing with airlines. Since having Mathieu, I've never been so eager to leave on time to be able to spend as much time as possible with him when I get home.

Tell us about your family
My family consists of me, my husband Dave and our son Drew who has just turned 2 today. I'm also 34 weeks pregnant with another little boy who's due to arrive in January. We live in a very small village in the Gers with our dog and two cats.

Kathryn Darkin



What do you miss most about "home"?

I do miss close family and friends, but thanks to Skype and email I'm able to stay in contact on a regular basis. Now that the weather's turned more wintry, it reminds me of the times we'd get all wrapped up against the cold and go for walks in the country - often ending up in a cosy pub for a well earned drink!

What brings you to Toulouse?

Wine, cheese, nice people and brilliant location. What's not to love about the south-west of France. I moved to Toulouse this summer with my family of 6 from Hong Kong to live on a farm in the country side. With the proximity to the city this gives me the opportunity of joining a lovely international group like Tots and be part of the local french community. For me that's the perfect combination. Just need to work on my french...



Sabine Emmet

Tell us about your family

I'm 29 year old British guy who met Lea from Germany in the Czech Republic as an Erasmus student many years ago. We ended up together in Berlin where our daughter Eloise was born. We are have been living in Bruguieres since August 2013 and time is flying by here. I was working in Germany the last five years as an advertising Art Director. Far too much overtime and a good opportunity for Lea allowed to up sticks to France and try to achieve a better life-work balance (see what I did there). For the holiday we'll be in Dusseldorf & Hamburg.

Andrew Kelly



And there's more.....!!
A warm welcome to:

- Kristin Palmer
- Kelly Saunders
- Madeleine Solomons
- Sonia Ruiz
- Lauren Morley
- Carla Palmer
- Rachel Marseillac
- Corrine Ellis
- Leanne Roach
- Annika Gutwinski
- Simona Tobia
- Katie Tolchinsky
- Laura Cherdel

AUTUMN TERM ROUNDUP

In addition to the regular weekly activities, there have been some additional special events over the last few months...

**16th October 2014: Annual General Meeting
Le Spirit, Beauzelle**

"The food was yummy. Had a great night and was lovely meeting new members"
Amanda Jones



**31st October 2014: Halloween Party
Salle les Temps Libre, Leguevin**

"Thank you to everyone involved in making it such a great Halloween party - we had a fab time"
Sarah Lemeé



**13th November 2014:
Toulouse Walking Tour... with lots of buggies**

"Thankyou LJ for organising a very fun toulouse walking tour this morning! We enjoyed it all, especially the weird looks we got from passers by... I don't think they had ever seen so many buggies all together in one place". Carol Alexande-Reid

**23rd November 2014:
Tots Stall @ the TWIG Christmas Fair**

A fantastic 950euros was made at the fair, with 25% of this going towards TWIG charities. So far, Tots & Co have also made over 400euros in additional fundraising through pre & post fair sales. Thanks to everyone who donated; collected, cleaned and organised the items; helped out on the day; and are carrying on fundraising with the items we have left!



A GUIDE TO THE PYRENEAN SKI RESORTS

BY CHARLEY SHEFFIELD

The Pyrenees has had two of the best winters on record for snow, so fingers crossed for another good season. Here's my guide to the best resorts, starting from east to west...

font-romeu

<http://www.font-romeu.fr/fr>

Fairly high resort so can have better snow than many others. Really good for ski de fond (cross country skiing) and has great scenery. About 2 hour drive from Toulouse. Close to Perpignan and Barcelona so can get busy in their school holidays.

les angles

<http://www.lesangles.com/fr>

Close to Font-Romeu so you can ski both resorts if you're staying for a long weekend or week. Also has good ski de fond.

ax les thermes (bonascre)

<http://www.ax-ski.com/fr/>

The closest big resort to Toulouse - takes about 1 hours to drive there. The downside is that it can get very busy and the traffic can be bad. You can also get the train there from Toulouse. The ski school in Bonascre is good and the town of Ax is pretty. There are some good thermal spas there to help you relax after a hard day on the mountain.

ascou

<http://www.ascou-ski.com/>

Smaller, cheaper resort near Ax Les Thermes. Good for children and beginners as often not very busy.

plateau de beille

<http://www.beille.fr/>

Small resort near Ax les Thermes to go sledging in (luge), but there is a small drag lift for children/beginner skiers. Also ski de fond and snow shoe hiking (raquettes).

guzet

<http://www.haut-couserans.com/fr/hiver/ski/>

Small but pretty resort, popular with the French. Good for children and complete beginners and for walking/snow shoe

hiking.

luchon

Luchon is a pretty old spa town with lots of shops and restaurants and a thermal spa that is a great place to stay and travel to nearby ski resorts. Or there is a lift in the town that takes you up to the Superbagneres resort. Easy access from Toulouse - about 1 hour drive.

superbagneres

<http://www.luchon-superbagneres.com/>
Good for children and complete beginners as there is a nice plateau at the bottom to ski in and out of. But still plenty to keep intermediate skiers happy.

le mourtis

<http://mourtis.fr/>

Smaller resort near Luchon, good for children.

peyragudes

<http://www.peyragudes.com/>

About 1 hour drive from Toulouse. Not at all pretty, but good resort for intermediate skiers. When the vallée blanche is open it's a good off piste run.

andorra

The principality of Andorra is a great place to ski, and to do some duty free shopping. Just remember to take your passport. The Soldeu ski domain is one of the best places to ski and has some nice mountain restaurants to have lunch in.

soldeu - <http://www.soldeu-andorra.com/> upmarket resort, great for a romantic getaway. The Sport Hotel is very glamorous.

pas de la casa - <http://www.pasdelacasa-andorra.com/> it might look like a giant duty free shopping centre but it has great skiing and a lively nightlife. Can get very cold, as it's high.

el tarter - <http://www.soldeu-andorra.com/el-tarter.php> cheaper than the other two resorts but within the same ski domain.



saint lary soulan

<http://www.saintlary.com/>

About 1 hours from Toulouse by car. Big ski area with three sections (some lifts get shut in quieter periods). Nice town with easy access. Good for families but it can get very busy in school holidays.

val louron

<http://www.val-louron-ski.com/>

Near Saint Lary but quieter so good for children and beginners.

piau engaly

<http://www.piau-engaly.com/fr/index.aspx>

The highest French Pyrenean resort with very good off piste. About 2 hour drive from Toulouse. Often quieter than other resorts in busy periods, but it is prone to bad weather.

baqueira/beret (spain)

<http://www.baqueira.es/>

A favourite with the Spanish royal family, it has great runs for intermediate/advanced skiers. There are champagne bars and husky dog sledging plus an extreme ski competition. 2 hours from Toulouse.

la mongie/barèges

Big ski area with the highest lift in the Pyrenees - best off piste run from the Pic du Midi observatory. Can be difficult to get to if there is a lot of snow and can get very cold. Nice tree skiing. The town is purpose built so not pretty but there is a great mountain restaurant called L'Etape du Berger.

cauterets

<http://www.cauterets.com/>

Smaller resort so good for children. Can get lots and lots of snow - it was the resort with the most snow of anywhere in the world in 2012/13! An avalanche took out one of the main lifts so check if it has been repaired. The pretty town has a natural thermal spa where you can sit outside in the Bains du Rocher. About 2 hours from Toulouse.

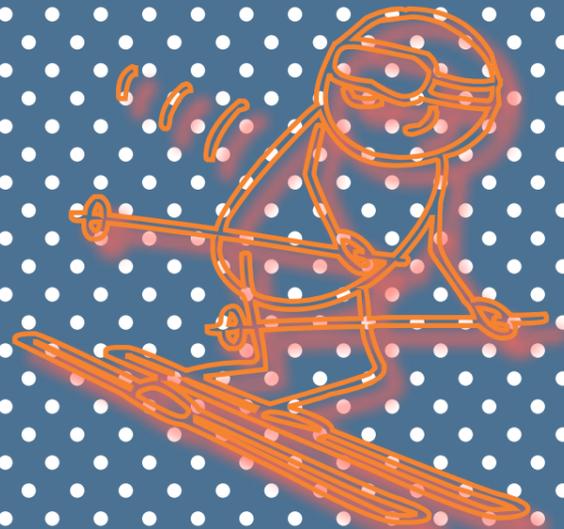


Buy your lift passes online beforehand to avoid wasting time queuing when you arrive. You can also get them from the Airbus ski clubs.

Reserve your hire skis/boots online beforehand too - in busy weeks you can waste a whole morning getting kitted out. Or get them in advance from Maison du Ski on route d'Espagne in Toulouse.

Drive prepared - get snow chains and learn how to put them on beforehand. There's nothing worse than trying to fit snow chains in the dark while its snowing with freezing hands.

The weather in the Pyrenees can change very quickly and be completely different from one valley to the next. Check the weather forecast and dress appropriately.



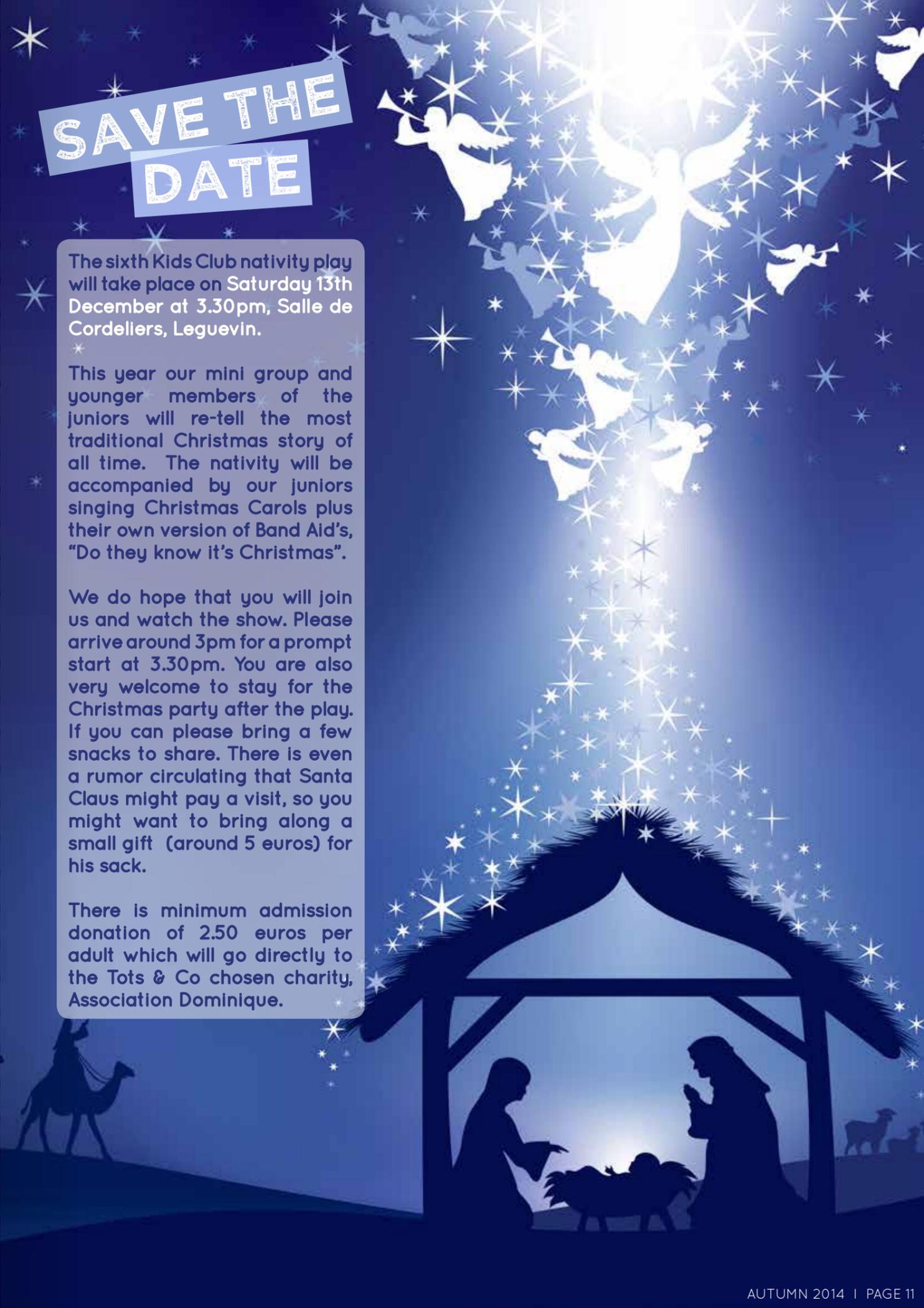
SAVE THE DATE

The sixth Kids Club nativity play will take place on Saturday 13th December at 3.30pm, Salle de Cordeliers, Leguevin.

This year our mini group and younger members of the juniors will re-tell the most traditional Christmas story of all time. The nativity will be accompanied by our juniors singing Christmas Carols plus their own version of Band Aid's, "Do they know it's Christmas".

We do hope that you will join us and watch the show. Please arrive around 3pm for a prompt start at 3.30pm. You are also very welcome to stay for the Christmas party after the play. If you can please bring a few snacks to share. There is even a rumor circulating that Santa Claus might pay a visit, so you might want to bring along a small gift (around 5 euros) for his sack.

There is minimum admission donation of 2.50 euros per adult which will go directly to the Tots & Co chosen charity, Association Dominique.





association dominique

& THE TOTS & CO SPRING FAIR

BY CELIA GREEN

Association Dominique is the charity association Tots & Co have supported over the last 11 years. The money we raise at various Tots & Co events, notably the Spring Fair and Christmas Nativity goes directly to them to help with their running costs.

Association Dominique is based in Fonsorbes and it welcomes & treats disabled children. The children's disabilities are due to various genetic syndromes like Down's Syndrome, or learning disorders like Aspergers and Autism. They also treat children with brain injuries, mainly children who have had accidents in swimming pools or suffered from lack of oxygen at birth.

Association Dominique offers families techniques and materials to assist and support their disabled child at home, multisensory treatments at the centre plus individual sessions with teams of specialist practitioners. They also give important moral support and help parents deal with the complicated paperwork that comes with supporting a disabled child.

The Delpech Family set up the Association in 1984 after the death of their son Dominique at the age of 10. Dominique had suffered from the brain inflammation encephalitis after a childhood bout of measles, ultimately leading to severe brain damage and multiple disabilities. Jacqui Delpech and her husband struggled to find support for Dominique in France and a trip to England resulted in the discovery of a rehabilitation technique involving multisensory treatments which helped Dominique live a better quality of life before he sadly passed away.

It is the only centre of its kind in France and over the past 30 years they have treated over 1500 children from 86 French departments (including overseas departments) as well as 11 foreign countries, including Belgium and The Netherlands.

Association Dominique raises money for their own costs, nevertheless they still struggle to raise enough funds to support as many families as they would like and to keep the Association running. This is why the Tots & Co fundraising efforts are of such importance to their ongoing costs. Last year and for the past several years our donation was used to pay for the transport and accommodation costs for families to travel to and stay in Fonsorbes so they could have their child treated at Association Dominique. This year Mme Delpech was struggling to cover a council tax bill of 4,500 euros and we were able to give her a cheque for money raised from the Spring Fair for almost exactly that amount, lifting a huge financial pressure off them.



Presenting the cheque to Mme Delpech at Association Dominique Offices

TOTS AND CO SUPPORTING
ASSOCIATION DOMINIQUE SINCE 2004

SPRING FAIR

foire de
printemps

SAMEDI 14 MARS 2015
10H-17H FONSORBES

**BRITISH GOODS
AND SERVICES**
produits britanniques

ENGLISH BOOKS
livres en anglais

**CRAFTS, JEWELLERY
DECORATIONS**
marché artisanal : déco, bijoux...

ENGLISH ENTERTAINMENT
animations anglophones

BRITISH TEA ROOM
salon de thé British

**CHILDREN'S CRAFT
AND PLAY CORNER**
animations pour enfants

AND MUCH MUCH MORE!
et plus encore!

SALLE POLYVALENTE DU TREPADÉ • PLACE DU TREPADÉ • 31470 FONSORBES

WWW.TOTSANDCO.ORG • WWW.ASSOCIATION-DOMINIQUE.COM



WE
NEED
YOU

Association Dominique and Tots & Co. need you. The Spring Fair is happening on Saturday 14th March 2015 and the Spring Fair organisers need help to form a **Spring Fair Taskforce**.

There will be small roles on the day as well as organisational roles in advance that require volunteers.

We will be running an English Tea Room, a Raffle, Bottle Tombola, Book Stall and a Demonstration Stage area on the day and all of these areas need people. You don't need any prior experience, just enthusiasm and time.

I know we have very talented and organised people within our 100 Tots & Co. members, please make yourselves known! We can't do it without you.

Email Celia Green or Claire Hodges if you can help: tots.spring.fair@gmail.com

For further info:
www.totsandco.org/spring-fair-2015
www.association-dominique.com

CHRISTMAS IN ARIEGE

a short story about a
traditional french noel

When I went to Ariège last weekend, I met a bear. Yes, I really met a bear. Well, he looked like a person, but he was a bear. Ariège is full of bears like that, they say.

As I have never met a bear before, I took this opportunity to ask this one about Christmas in his country, and what it used to be like when he was just a little cub.

"Oh, it was nothing special, really. We didn't have much, you see. So there isn't that much to tell," he said. But he could see that I was serious with my request, so he motioned to me to get the chair from the corner and join him in front of the fire.

It was a funny chair, the woven seat was very low, so I first thought it was meant for kids, but when I sat down I noticed that the back of the chair was tall enough to support my head. "You see, this was the chair the women sat on when they were sewing by the fire. Low enough to catch enough light from the fire to see their needlework, but still comfortable enough to sit up straight and rest their tired backs in between," explained the bear. "And just like you, they would sit on that chair by the fire and listen to the stories." He took a puff from his pipe, and the smoke rose to the ceiling, the scent of herbs and tobacco mingling with the smoke of the burning wood. He sat back in his big old chair, put his paws as close to the fire as he could without singeing his fur, and started his story:

"Christmas was always very exciting for us little ones, just like it is today. When the Christmas tree went up, we loved watching the cats disappear into it, only to jump out a few seconds later, angrily shaking off the needles. But we knew Christmas was hard as well – because it took all night! So every year we desperately tried to make it all the way through, just to find ourselves waking up, tucked into mamie's big bed, having fallen asleep too early once again! Mamie and her daughter – my mother – would wake us up in the morning with....but hold on, I am getting

ahead of myself!

So I will tell you about the first year I finally managed to stay awake. Christmas is on the 24th of December, the day little Jesus was born to his mother Mary. All day long mother and mamie would chase us out of the kitchen, where we were trying to get a glimpse of the exciting things that went in and out of the oven, and later trying to snaffle some food. Dinner was skipped that day, and replaced by a special feast after the midnight mass. So all evening we had to distract ourselves and our rumbling bellies, but that wasn't too hard when there was a feast to come – and presents! These were brought by Pere Noël, a good old man with a big belly and a red coat, who came all the way from the North Pole on his sledge pulled by reindeers to bring presents to those who have been good. We just hoped we had been good enough that year. We had certainly tried, although maybe we hadn't always succeeded. But presents were still a whole night away, for they would not arrive until the next morning. It's a long way from the North Pole to Ariège.

That year I might have rested my eyes for a few minutes during the evening, but I had told my older brother he was allowed to pinch me every time I fell asleep. And I didn't have to say that twice, he was delighted. He didn't always wait until I was asleep though. So when it was time to go to midnight mass, I was still awake. We all wrapped up warm, it was cold outside, and the thin layer of snow had an icy crust on top. And church was never heated. But that night there were so many people in the church, that it felt like little Jesus had had a fire in his stable after all. Mass lasted for a long time, maybe two hours, and we did get a bit restless, despite lots and lots of hymns to sing. But we didn't get tired of watching all the people dressed up in their best clothes. When we got back home, the house was still lovely and warm – in the evening dad had put a special log on the fire, a big one that would last all night.



This was the Christmas log.

Finally the big feast was there, and we couldn't believe our eyes. For a start, we were allowed to try a bit of wine, which tasted strong and not nice at all, but it made us giggle a lot. Then we ate a bird, but it wasn't a duck or a chicken. It was a lark, as our father told us, which the men had hunted a few days earlier. These days it is of course forbidden to eat lark, but back then there were many of these birds around. Inside the lark was homemade foie gras, the rich taste of which had seeped through the tender bird. We thought we had never eaten anything better. When we thought we couldn't possibly eat any more, mamie brought out a plate stacked high with Oreillettes – special crispy cakes fried in oil. They were still warm and smelled of hot sugar and dough. This was what Christmas was all about. And we were allowed to eat as much as we wanted!

After the meal, which finished at about 4 o'clock in the morning, the grown ups would sit around the fire, smoke and drink wine or eau de vie to digest. I can hardly remember making it to my bed before I fell into a deep sleep, surrounded by the smells of this magic night. The next morning we woke up before our parents, but we were not able to play quietly and wait. We stormed to the fireplace to find our presents. And we must have been

good! For me, Pere Noël had brought a pair of shoes, an orange and a toy gun carved from wood – my brother got a matching one, so we played hunting larks for the rest of the day. After a year in my brother's worn out shoes I was very grateful that Pere Noël had got my shoe size right. They were so comfortable! The rest of the day was spent resting and playing, everyone was full of content, the spirit of Christmas and Oreillettes.

Here the old bear finished his story, leaned back in his chair, dragged from his pipe again, and in the mingling clouds I thought I could smell hot sugar, dough and oranges.

BY NINA BAUSEK



In many European countries, including Belgium, where I come from, we celebrate Saint-Nicolas on the 6th December. He is the patron saint of children and that's why children are "spoiled" on that day.

During the week before, children leave their shoe by the chimney (where Saint Nicolas passes) every evening, and every morning wake up to find it filled with a little gift of a mandarin or sweets.

On the eve of 6th December they must leave a cup of tea for Saint Nicolas and a carrot for his donkey on a table next to the chimney and sing a song so Saint Nicolas can bring them a big plate full of mandarins and cookies called "spekuloos"... IF they have been good all year long of course!

BY VALERIE DOREE

SAINT-NICOLAS

Grand Saint-Nicolas
 Patron des écoliers > patron of schoolchildren
 Apporte-moi des pommes > bring me apples
 Dans mon petit panier > in my basket
 Je serai toujours sage > I promise I'll always be good
 Comme une petite image > as a picture (french expression!)
 J'apprendrai mes leçons > I'll learn my lessons
 Pour avoir des bonbons > to get candies
 Venez, venez Saint-Nicolas > please come Saint-Nicolas!
 Venez, venez Saint-Nicolas
 Venez, venez Saint-Nicolas

Et tra la la ...

SPEKULOOS DE LIEGE DE MON BON PAPA (my grand father's cookies)

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 kg of flour | • | Mix all the ingredients together |
| 5 eggs | • | in a bowl to make a dough. |
| 100g almonds | • | Cover the bowl with a tea |
| 3/4 kg natural brown sugar | • | towel and let it rise overnight. |
| 350g butter | • | Create small balls of cookie |
| 1tbsp cinnamon (can be mixed with ginger or all spice) | • | dough and place on a baking tray. |
| 2 packs of baking powder | • | Bake in a warm oven 200°C for 11 minutes. Can be decorated as you wish. |

FESTIVE RECIPES

Oreillette:

- 125g flour (Farine suprême)
- a little bit of icing sugar
- 1 tsp Eau de fleur d'oranger
- oil for frying
- 125g cake flour (Farine à gâteaux)
- 60g butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 sachet of vanilla sugar



by Nina Bausek

Mix flour, eggs, vanilla sugar, eau de fleur d'oranger, butter and salt in a bowl and knead into a ball.

it sit at room temperature for 15 min. Roll out thinly and cut out rectangles of about 10x15cm.

Fry one oreillette after the other, carefully turning them around halfway through. Let them drip dry on a kitchen towel. When they are tepid, sprinkle them with icing sugar.

Coat it on flour and wrap it in cling film to rest in the fridge for 3 hours. Take it out and let

Heat the oil in a deep frying pan. When little air bubbles form around an immersed wooden spoon, the oil is hot enough.

A cake to make with kids

- Pack of Mikado biscuits
- Pack of Wafer Biscuits
- Runny icing
- Icing sugar
- Marzipan or icing for decoration



by Priscilla Deegan

Use mikado biscuits for the house and wafer biscuits for the roof as per the photo.

Use runny icing to stick it all together and to give the snow effect (add icing sugar to a spoon of water until you get the required consistency).

You can decorate the scene around it with whatever works for you - christmas ornaments, figurines and / or christmas trees made from coloured almond paste/icing..

Make little holes in the wafers and thread a mikado biscuit through the roof biscuits.

christmas craft

Here are a few ideas that you can do with your children's hand and footprints.

These make great personalised gifts for grandparents. Or you could even make them into Christmas cards. If you are not feeling brave enough to get out the paint, you can also draw around your child's hands and feet and cut out the shapes.

Or you could make your own family Christmas tree. This could be done each year to show how your children's hands have grown.

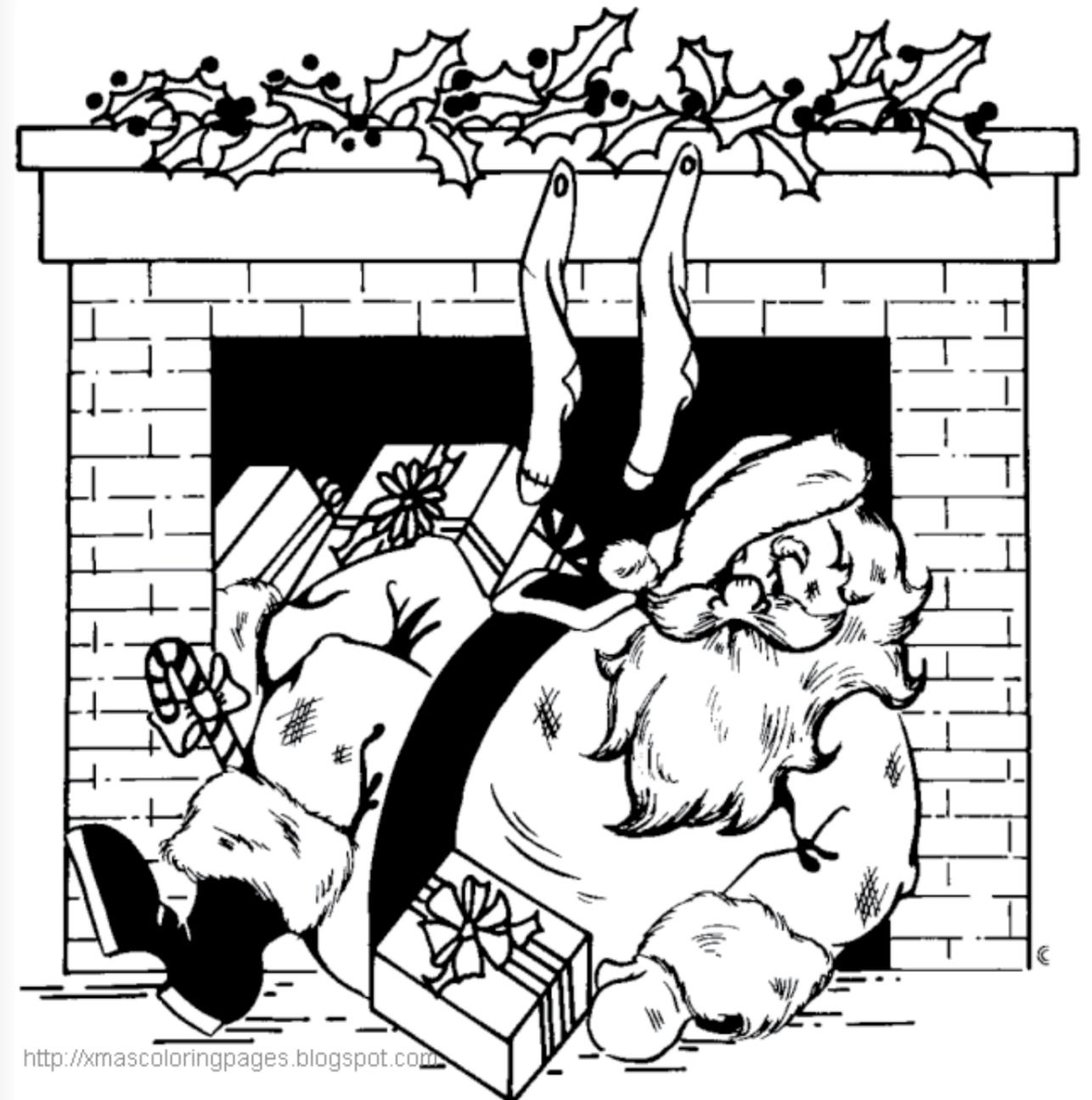
by Lj Desmeulles



cut me out & colour me in!

When Santa got stuck up the chimney
He began to shout
"You girls and boys, won't get any toys,
if you don't pull me out!
My beard is black. There's soot in my sack.
My nose is tickly too.
When Santa got stuck up the chimney
Aaachoo, Achoo, Achoo!"

When Santa got stuck up the chimney
He began to yell
"Oh hurry please it's such a squeeze
My sack is stuck as well!
Oh dear, Oh dear, it's cold up here
And Rudolph's nose is blue.
When Santa got stuck up the chimney
Aaachoo, Achoo, Achoo!"



oh christmas tree...

Feeling inspired after making the family Christmas Tree? Here are some more ideas to commemorate our favourite fir!



by Carol Alexander-Reid

THE SEASON



Sometimes you just get the feeling that you must do 'something' for charity.

It could be a 10k run, an Ironman !?!, wash some cars ? or sell cakes at the Spring Fair...

So many of us neither 'need' nor 'want' for anything nowadays that understanding a situation in which you are physically unable to afford to put food on the table, give birth in a hospital, or buy a single gift at Christmas seems unimaginable.

In the month of October 2014, I decided that I could help raise some money and use one of my personal skills to do so.

In that instant the idea of a Charity 'Photobooth' Fundraiser was born.

I logged onto Facebook and through the Tots & Co page was able to communicate my idea and very quickly the response was positive - many lovely Mums signed up for the shoot. The idea being to take a festive photo of their child for Christmas that they could then use to create Christmas cards, and keepsakes for family and friends back home.

As the project gathered speed, the amazing Kristin Palmer from Kristin Palmer Photography stepped in to offer some help. Without her the project would have raised half the amount it



FOR GOODWILL.....



did and a lot of disappointed Mums wouldn't have had a slot!

In total we had over 20 Mums sign up which was amazing.

We decided to raise money for 2 Charities:

The first being Secours Catholique who are a locally based Charity providing essentials to those in need; weekly food boxes, milk for babies, a hot lunch for the elderly, and clothing for families to name a few examples.

The second was 'Mercy for Mamas' a Uganda based charity who provide sterile birthing kits to mothers expecting babies. Without which women can die due to complications during childbirth as the hospitals all request that the mums to be bring their own kit, many of whom simply can't afford one.

The day was an amazing success! And through the organisation of time slots for each family, Kirsten and I had a really fun day (albeit a bit tiring!). We thoroughly enjoyed seeing all the children dressed in their finest Christmas ensembles, and even through a few 'little dramas' all the children got a good photo!

The results speak for themselves and with a total of 388 euros raised we were thrilled with the outcome and so were the Charities.



BY LISA ALLAN



Tots & Co

DISCLAIMER

All information in this Newsletter is entirely the view or opinion of the author. It is advisable that you verify any information from this Newsletter before relying on it.

Tots & Co (also known as Mother & Toddler Group) accept no responsibility for the consequences of error or for any loss or damage suffered by users of any of the information and material contained in this Newsletter.