



Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana

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Celebrate Winter Mini-Training

Our Girl Scout council enjoys great diversity in its over 245 communities in six counties in northeast Illinois and four in northwest Indiana. Here are some program activities for Girl Scouts to experience that embrace a rich variety of traditions. They are winter holidays everyone can celebrate.



The Winter Solstice – December 21 or 22

Boxing Day – December 26

Kwanzaa – December 26 – January 1

Chinese New Year – January 26, 2009

The Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice is the day when the sun shines the fewest hours and there is darkness for most of the day. This day is December 21 or 22 in the northern hemisphere, the area north of the equator. In Illinois, there are only about nine hours of daylight and 15 hours of darkness on the Winter Solstice. In the southern hemisphere, the area south of the equator, the winter solstice is June 21 or 22. This occurs because the earth is tilted as it moves around the sun. For one-half of the year the northern hemisphere is closest to the sun and it is summer here. The other half of the year the southern hemisphere is closest to the sun and it is summer there and winter here.

In ancient times people celebrated the Winter Solstice, a time when the days grew short and the sun was at its lowest point in the sky. Many people dreaded the cold, dark days of winter. So when the sun seemed to change its course and grow in strength again, they rejoiced.

In some places, people performed rituals and ceremonies to mark this special time. The Druids in Britain decorated oak trees with apples and candles to encourage the return of the sun. The Celts brought evergreens inside to protect their homes. Everyone lit candles and bonfires to chase away the darkness.

Today, candles, fir trees, and evergreens continue to symbolize this time of year. People still celebrate the beginning of winter. They know that the sun will soon bring new light and the promise of spring.

Solstice Spoons - Enclose a solstice spoon with a packet of hot chocolate and give to your friends as a solstice gift:

Supplies:

- Plastic spoons
- White chocolate for dipping
- Dark chocolate for dipping
- Waxed paper
- Glass bowls
- Toothpicks
- Plastic wrap
- Ribbon

Directions:

- Put the white and dark chocolate in separate bowls and melt in the microwave for one or two minutes, stopping to stir every fifteen seconds. The mixture should be smooth.
- Submerge a spoon into one bowl until the bowl of the spoon is full of chocolate and both sides are coated. Continue with each spoon, coating each in turn with one of the two kinds of chocolate.
- Use toothpicks to drizzle each spoon with the contrasting color of chocolate.
- Lay the spoons on the wax paper until they are completely dry, about 45 minutes.
- To give as solstice gifts, cover with plastic wrap, and tie with ribbon.

Snowman Game

Supplies:

- A roll of toilet paper for each team
- Old hats and scarves
- Black construction paper for buttons



How to play the game:

- Divide girls into several teams.
- At the signal, each team wraps one of its members in toilet paper, leaving the eyes and nose uncovered.
- When the "snowman" is covered in toilet paper, the team members "decorate" their snowman with a hat, scarf, and construction paper.

Mitten Relay Game

Supplies: One pair of mittens for each girl

How to play the game:

- Divide girls into two teams.
- Separate pairs of mittens. Give each girl one mitten from the pair and put the matching mitten in a pile in front of the lines.
- When the leader says, "Go," one girl from each team runs to the pile and tries to find her other mitten.
- After she puts on her mitten, she runs back and tags the next girl on her team.
- The first team to find all their mittens wins.

Source: <http://www.ellenjackson.net/>

BOXING DAY



Boxing Day takes place on December 26th or the following Monday if December 26 falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Boxing Day is celebrated in Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, and Canada.

Boxing Day began in England in the middle of the nineteenth century under Queen Victoria. Boxing Day was a way for families with means to donate gifts of cash, or other goods, to those in need.

There are two theories on the origin of Boxing Day and why it is celebrated. The first is that centuries ago, on the day after Christmas, those who were well-to-do would give boxes containing food and fruit, clothing, or money to servants and trades people. The gifts were an expression of gratitude, much like a bonus from an employer for a job well done today. These gifts, given in boxes, gave the holiday its name: Boxing Day.

The second possibility is that Boxing Day began from the tradition of opening the alms boxes placed in churches over the holiday season. The contents were distributed to the less fortunate the day after Christmas.

Today, Boxing Day is celebrated with family and friends sharing lots of food, friendship, and love. Government buildings are closed but the shopping centers are open and filled with people exchanging gifts or buying holiday items on sale.

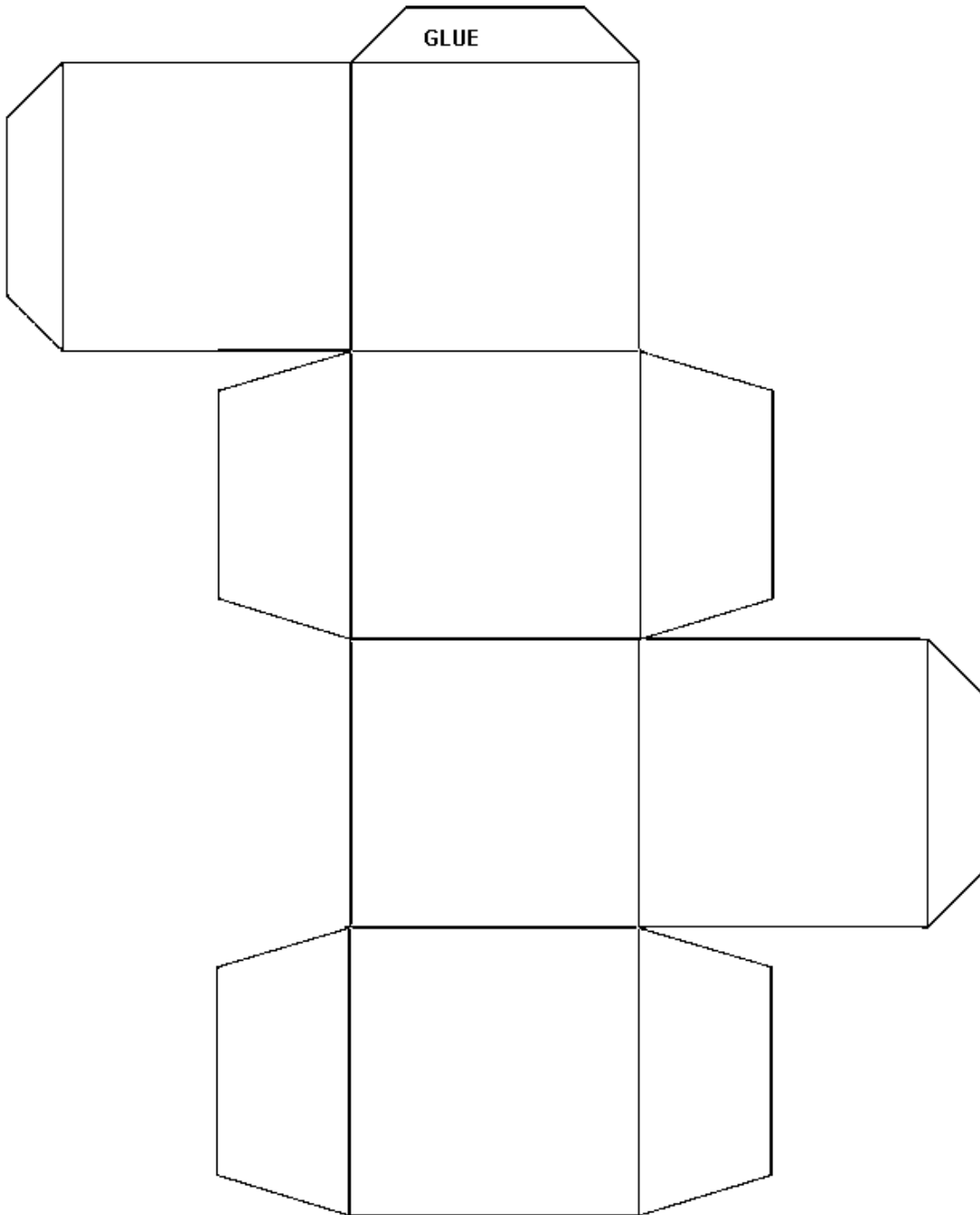
To keep the tradition of Boxing Day alive, many businesses, organizations, and families donate their time, services, and money to aid food banks and provide gifts for those less fortunate, or they may choose to help an individual family that is in need.

What a great extension of the holiday spirit! You might consider making this holiday a tradition in your family or Girl Scout troop. No matter where you live the simple principle of giving to others less fortunate than yourself can be put into practice.

Make a Small Gift Box (Pattern on page 4)

- Copy the box pattern on a sheet of cardstock, 8 ½ " by 11." If you want a bigger box, enlarge the pattern on a photocopier and use a larger sheet of cardboard.
- Decorate the box with crayons, markers, or stickers.
- Cut out the box on the outside lines. Do not cut off any sections.
- Score the remaining lines with a ball point pen or a dull knife.
- Fold the sections away from you.
- Apply a thin layer of glue where indicated and stick the sides together.
- Close the bottom and top of the box. The bottom can also be glued shut.

Small Gift Box Pattern



KWANZAA



Kwanzaa is a non-religious African American holiday which celebrates family, community, and culture. It is celebrated for seven days: December 26 - January 1.

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chairman of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, created Kwanzaa in 1966. After the Watts riots in Los Angeles, Dr. Karenga searched for ways to bring African-Americans together as a community. He researched African "first fruit" (harvest) celebrations. Karenga combined aspects of several different harvest celebrations, such as those of the Ashanti and the Zulu, to form the basis of Kwanzaa.

The name Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili. Each family celebrates Kwanzaa in its own way, but celebrations often include songs and dances, African drum playing, storytelling, poetry reading, and a large traditional meal of African-American favorites. On each of the seven nights, the family gathers and a child lights one of the candles on the Kinara (candleholder). Then one of the seven principles is discussed. The principles, called the Nguzo Saba ("seven principles" in Swahili) are values of African culture which contribute to building and reinforcing community among African-Americans. An African feast, called a Karamu, is held on December 31.

The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa are:

- *Umoja* (oo-MOH-jah): **Unity**. Success starts with Unity. Unity of family, community, nation and race.
- *Kujichagulia* (koo-jee-chah-goo-LEE-ah): **Self-Determination**. To be responsible and create your own destiny.
- *Ujima* (oo-JEE-mah): **Collective work and responsibility**. To build and maintain a community together. To work together to help one another within the community.
- *Ujamaa* (oo-jah-MAH): **Collective economics**. To build, maintain, and support our own stores, establishments, and businesses.
- *Nia* (NEE-ah): **Purpose**. To restore African American people to their traditional greatness. To be responsible to Those Who Came Before (our ancestors) and to Those Who Will Follow (our descendants).
- *Kuumba* (koo-OOM-bah): **Creativity**. Using creativity and imagination to make communities better than what was inherited.
- *Imani* (ee-MAH-nee): **Faith**. Believing in our people, our families, our educators, our leaders, and the righteousness of the African American struggle.

Make a Mancala Game

Play for hours when you create this fun African Mancala game from recycled egg cartons and tuna cans. Great for all ages!

Supplies:

- Cardboard egg carton (dozen size)
- 2 tuna cans; washed, rinsed, and dry
- Craft paints
- Paintbrush
- 48 marbles, tiny rocks, beads, beans, etc.

Instructions:

1. Paint the egg carton in the color desired. Let dry.
2. Paint the tuna cans on the outside. Let dry. (If you paint the inside, the paint will chip off as you play the game.)
3. Paint designs on the side of the egg carton and tuna cans if you wish. Let dry.
4. Play your game with a friend or family member.

Rules:

Object: Two (2) players compete against each other to collect as many marbles as they can before one of the players clears her side of the egg carton of all its marbles.

Setting up the game: Place the egg carton between the two players, lengthwise. The cups closest to the player designates her side of the board. The Mancala (tuna can) to her right is hers. Place four (4) marbles in each of the cups. Choose a player to go first.

Playing the game: The first player picks up all the marbles in one of her cups. The player then starts to the first cup to the right and starts dropping one marble in each. If she reaches the end of her side, she is to drop one marble in her Mancala, then continue around to the other side of the board. She is not, however, to drop a marble in her opponent's Mancala.

If the player places her last marble in her own Mancala, the player gets to play again. Example: If you start the game, a good play may be to choose the cup that is located 4th from the right. You would pick up 4 marbles, dropping one in each cup and ending in your Mancala. This gives you an extra turn.

If the player drops her last marble on her side of the board in an empty cup, she captures all the marbles in her opponent's cup directly across from that cup. All captured marbles, plus the capturing marble, gets put in the player's Mancala.

Players are not allowed to touch marbles in order to count them. If you touch your marbles, you are to play that cup.

Winning the game: The game ends when one player runs out of marbles on her side of the egg carton. When the game ends, the other player gets to take all her marbles from her side of the egg carton and place them in her own Mancala. Strategy sets in by determining whether it is wiser to go out or play longer, depending on how many marbles are in the opposing player's cups.

Source: <http://crafts.kaboose.com/mancala-game.html>

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Chinese New Year is the longest and most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. The Chinese year 4707, the year of the ox, begins on Jan. 26, 2009.

New Year's Eve is celebrated with a communal feast called "surrounding the stove" or *weilu*. It symbolizes family unity and honors the past and present generations. For the next 15 days, the people follow set holiday traditions, which include customs to bring the family good luck in the new year.



Chinese New Year Decorations

Prior to New Year's Day, Chinese families decorate their living rooms with vases of pretty blossoms, platters of oranges and tangerines, and a candy tray with eight varieties of dried sweet fruit. On walls and doors are happy wishes written on red paper. Popular wishes are "May you enjoy continuous good health" and "May the Star of Happiness, the Star of Wealth, and the Star of Longevity shine on you."

Fireworks and Family Feasts

At Chinese New Year celebrations, people wear red clothes, decorate with poems on red paper, and give children "lucky money" in red envelopes. Red symbolizes fire which, according to legend, can drive away bad luck. The fireworks that shower the festivities are rooted in a similar ancient custom. Long ago, people in China lit bamboo stalks, believing that the crackling flames would frighten evil spirits.

The Lantern Festival

In China, the New Year is a time of family reunion. Family members gather at each other's homes for visits and shared meals, most significantly a feast on New Year's Eve. In the United States, however, many early Chinese immigrants arrived without their families, and found a sense of community through neighborhood associations instead. Today, many Chinese-American neighborhood associations host banquets and other New Year events.

Chinese New Year ends with the lantern festival on the fifteenth day of the month. Some of the lanterns may be works of art, painted with birds, animals, flowers, zodiac signs, and scenes from legend and history. People hang glowing lanterns in temples, and carry lanterns to an evening parade under the light of the full moon.

In many areas the highlight of the lantern festival is the dragon dance. The dragon—which might stretch 100 feet long—is typically made of silk, paper, and bamboo. Traditionally the dragon is held aloft by young men who dance as they guide the colorful beast through the streets. In the United States, where the New Year is celebrated with a shortened schedule, the dragon dance always takes place on a weekend. In addition, many Chinese-American communities have added American parade elements such as marching bands and floats.

Make a Chinese New Year Dragon

Supplies:

- Paper egg carton
- Scissors
- Hole punch
- Craft paint (yellow, black, and other colors)
- Paint brushes
- 7mm wiggle eyes
- 1/4" white pom-pom balls
- Red felt scrap
- Tacky glue
- 2 jingle bells (1/2")
- Ribbon (1/4" wide)



Instructions:

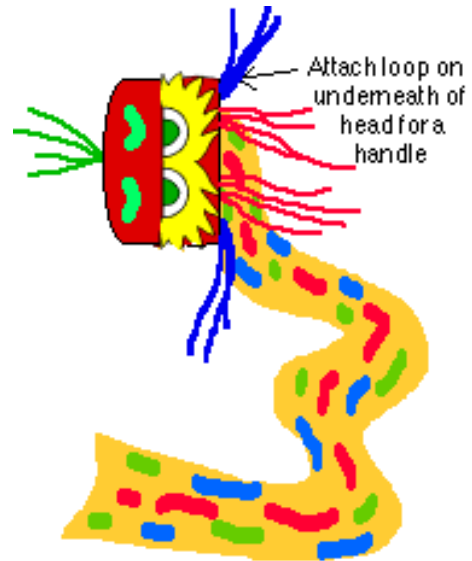
- Cut the cups apart on the egg carton. Even out the edges so the cup will balance upside down on the table.
- Paint the inside of one cup black; this is the inside of the mouth. Paint the outside yellow.
- Using as few or as many cups as you wish, paint the outside of the cups yellow. Let dry.
- Paint different color dots on the yellow cups. Let dry.
- Punch 2 holes in each cup directly across from each other.
- Lace the ribbon through the holes to tie the dragon together.
- Tie a jingle bell on each end of the ribbon.
- Glue the head on the dragon. Note: You may need to "prop" the head up while it dries.
- Cut a red tongue out of felt and glue inside of mouth.
- Glue 2 pom-poms on top of the head and then glue 2 wiggle eyes to the pom-poms (see photo). Let dry.
- If you like, you can add a "leash" through the hole of the dragon to walk it around.

Have a Dragon Parade

The girls can stage their own Chinese New Year parade with this crepe paper dragon.

Supplies:

- Craft paints, in colors desired
- Paintbrushes
- Wide crepe paper (at least 3 ½ " x 4')
- Narrow crepe paper in bright colors
- Scissors
- Construction paper, markers, or paints to decorate the head
- Glue
- 7" paper plate
- Heavy paper (1" x 7")
- Stapler



Instructions

- To make the body of the dragon, cut a strip of wide crepe paper 3 1/3 - 4" wide and 4 to 6' long.
- Have the girls dab an assortment of spots and lines on the crepe paper with a paintbrush. Let dry. If desired, hang the crepe paper on a clothesline.
- Take the paper plate and trim off the two sides as shown.
- Fold the plate in half. Decorate one half with eyes and nostrils as shown. Paint a red mouth on the inside of the plate.
- Take 5 pieces of narrow (about 2" wide) crepe paper that are one foot long each. Fold them half and in half again lengthwise, then unfold and have the girls cut them along the folds, making each streamer have 4 long strips. Do not cut the last inch so they can be attached easily as one piece. Four will make a mane on the back of the dragon's head and one will be a beard.
- Staple the handle across the bottom of the folded plate (made from a 1"x7" piece of sturdy paper).
- Glue the 4 crepe paper strips you just made to the underneath back of the head. Glue the wide body strip below them. Glue the last narrow set of strips to the dragon's chin at the bottom front of the plate.
- Let the glue dry, grab the handle with one hand, hold your dragon high, and have a parade. Be sure to make your dragon dance!

Source: http://holidays.kaboose.com/chinese-new-year/chinese_new_year.html