



Friends of Portsmouth & Young Friends of Portsmouth

Merry & Bright

CHRISTMAS TREE FIGHT



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2026 School District Christmas Tree Decorating & Fundraising Competition

Friends of Portsmouth & Young Friends of Portsmouth | Winterfest 2026

School Information & Guidelines

It's time to get **Merry & Bright!** 🌲 We're inviting Scioto County schools to come together, get creative, and decorate Christmas trees that will transform Market Street in downtown Portsmouth into a festive school showcase!

Gather your students, teachers, clubs, PTOs, families, and community supporters to create a tree that celebrates your school and its Christmas spirit. From handmade ornaments and traditional holiday themes to hometown pride and imaginative creations, we can't wait to see what you dream up!

The community will have an opportunity to admire the trees in person and support their favorite school through **\$1 People's Choice voting**. The winning school district will split the fundraising proceeds 50/50 with Friends of Portsmouth!

Participation is completely FREE!

IMPORTANT DATES

Friday, November 13 | Registration Deadline

Each participating school district or eligible independent school organization must complete its official registration.

Now – December 4 | Tree Decorating Period

Time to bring your school's Christmas vision to life!

Friday, December 4, by 5 PM | Photo Submission Deadline

All photos and theme descriptions must be submitted.

Sunday, December 6, 10 AM–12 PM | Tree Drop-Off & Setup

School representatives deliver and set up their completed trees on Market Street.

Sunday, December 6, 1–5 PM | Christmas Tree Showcase

Join us downtown to admire the decorated trees and vote for your favorite!

December 6–9 | Online People's Choice Voting

Paid online voting opens Sunday, December 6, at 1 PM and closes Wednesday, December 9, at 8 PM. Each vote costs \$1, and voting is unlimited!

Sunday, December 6, by 6 PM | Tree Pickup

All participating schools must remove their trees by 6 PM.

Thursday, December 10 | Winner Announced

One lucky school district will be crowned the Merry & Bright Christmas Tree Fight Champion!

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- **All Scioto County Schools:** Open to public, private, and parochial schools throughout Scioto County.
- **One Tree Per District:** Each school district may register ONE Christmas tree. Elementary, middle, and high schools within the same district are encouraged to collaborate on one shared entry.
- **Independent Schools:** Independent school organizations that are not part of a school district may register one tree of their own.
- **Adult Coordinator:** Each participating district or independent school must designate one responsible adult to serve as its primary contact and coordinate its entry.
- **Free Participation:** There is no cost to enter! Each school or district is responsible for providing its artificial tree, decorations, supplies, transportation, setup, and removal. Donations and sponsorships from families, PTOs, clubs, and local businesses are welcome.

- **Enter Both Competitions:** School districts may participate in the Merry & Bright Christmas Tree Fight while their individual schools also compete separately in Deck the Halls.

Please Note: Unlike Deck the Halls, which allows eligible school levels to register separately, the Christmas Tree Fight allows only ONE entry per school district.

TREE DECORATING RULES & GUIDELINES

1. Choose Your Tree

Each entry must feature one freestanding artificial Christmas tree that is a minimum of 4 feet tall and no taller than 9 feet, with a sturdy, weighted or otherwise stabilized base. Elevated risers and oversized extensions are not permitted. Friends of Portsmouth will assign designated display spaces.

2. Let Your Creativity Shine!

Choose any school-appropriate Christmas theme! Traditional Christmas, hometown holidays, favorite books, school spirit, handmade creations, or something completely original are all welcome.

We especially encourage **student-made ornaments, artwork, and meaningful decorations** that tell your school's story!

3. Keep It Safe & Weather-Ready

Trees will be displayed outdoors for several hours, so decorations must be securely attached and appropriate for December weather.

Glass ornaments, candles, open flames, sharp objects, food, loose glitter, extension cords, and plug-in lights are not permitted.

Battery-operated LED lights are welcome but optional. Batteries must be protected from moisture.

4. Give Your Tree a Name!

Each tree must include a weather-resistant sign displaying the participating school or district's name and creative Christmas tree title. Signs and decorations must remain within the designated display space.

5. Setup & Removal

A designated adult representative must deliver the completed tree between **10 AM and noon on Sunday, December 6**, check in with event organizers, and secure the tree as instructed.

All trees must be picked up by **6 PM that evening**.

Schools are responsible for their trees throughout the event. Friends of Portsmouth will coordinate placement but cannot guarantee protection from weather or incidental damage.

6. Weather Considerations

In the event of severe weather or unsafe conditions, Friends of Portsmouth reserves the right to relocate, shorten, or cancel the in-person showcase.

If this occurs, the competition may continue online using each school's submitted photographs.

PHOTOS & THE STORY BEHIND YOUR TREE

Ready to show off your Christmas creation? Each participating school district may submit:

- **Up to 10 high-quality photos** of its completed tree, including a full view and close-up details of special ornaments.
- **A theme description of 100 words or less** explaining the inspiration behind the tree, student contributions, and any special connection to the school or community.
- **School or district name, tree title, and coordinator contact information.**

Submission Deadline: Friday, December 4, at 5 PM

A separate photo submission link and instructions will be emailed to registered school coordinators closer to the deadline.

Friends of Portsmouth will use the approved photos and descriptions to showcase participating trees alongside the official online voting ballot.

Only submit photographs approved for public use. Identifiable students should not appear without appropriate school and parent/guardian permissions.

By submitting approved materials, schools authorize Friends of Portsmouth to use them for Winterfest voting, promotion, and winner announcements.

CHRISTMAS TREE SHOWCASE & PEOPLE'S CHOICE VOTING

The community decides! Merry & Bright is a 100% People's Choice fundraising competition!

On **Sunday, December 6, from 1–5 PM**, participating trees will be displayed along Market Street in downtown Portsmouth for everyone to enjoy.

Families, friends, alumni, and community supporters are invited to visit the showcase and support their favorite schools!

Here's how voting works:

- **\$1 Per Vote:** Every vote costs \$1 and counts toward the selected school's total.
- **Unlimited Voting:** There is no limit to how many votes a person may purchase.
- **Vote Online or In Person:** Supporters may vote through the official online ballot or purchase votes at the December 6 showcase.
- **Online Voting:** Opens Sunday, December 6, at 1 PM and closes Wednesday, December 9, at 8 PM.
- **In-Person Voting:** Available Sunday, December 6, from 1–5 PM during the showcase.
- **People's Choice:** The school district receiving the most valid paid votes will be declared the winner.
- **No Judges:** There will be no judging panels, scoring rubrics, or additional award categories.
- **Spread the Word:** Schools are encouraged to share their entries and the official voting link with families, alumni, and community supporters.

Each \$1 purchased equals one vote. Online and in-person votes will be combined, with safeguards to prevent duplicate counting of payments.

Only verified, paid votes will count toward the final totals. Unpaid, refunded, or reversed transactions will not be included.

In the event of a tie for first place, Friends of Portsmouth will announce a short tie-breaker voting period before naming the winner.

Every vote supports our schools and the holiday traditions Friends of Portsmouth brings to our community!

PRIZES & FUNDRAISING

ONE WINNER | MERRY & BRIGHT PEOPLE'S CHOICE CHAMPION

The school district or eligible independent school organization receiving the highest number of paid votes will be crowned the **Merry & Bright Christmas Tree Fight Champion!**

And here's the exciting part:

THE WINNING SCHOOL SPLITS THE VOTING POT 50/50 WITH FRIENDS OF PORTSMOUTH!

The winning school district receives 50% of the gross proceeds generated by valid \$1 votes, while Friends of Portsmouth receives the remaining 50% to support community events and holiday programming.

For Example:

2,000 votes × \$1 = **\$2,000 total voting pot**

- **\$1,000** goes to the winning school district.
- **\$1,000** goes to Friends of Portsmouth.

The prize is calculated using gross revenue from valid votes before payment processing fees or other operating expenses. Refunds, chargebacks, and unpaid transactions are excluded. Friends of Portsmouth will cover its processing and administrative expenses from its share unless otherwise announced before voting begins.

How Can Schools Use Their Winnings?

Each participating district must designate one responsible adult coordinator. If the district wins, that coordinator will work with the appropriate school or district representatives to determine how the prize money will benefit the school, its students, or an approved project.

All funds must be distributed to an authorized school or district recipient, in accordance with applicable school policies. Prize money is not a personal award to the coordinator.

Please Note: Only ONE winning tree will be named. There are no second-place, third-place, or special-category awards.

The winning school will also receive recognition through Friends of Portsmouth and Winterfest promotions.

OFFICIAL REGISTRATION & QUESTIONS

Ready to join the Merry & Bright Christmas Tree Fight? Scan the QR code below to register your school district!

Participation is FREE! Each participating school district or eligible independent school organization must complete the official registration form to be entered into the competition.

Please designate one responsible adult to serve as your primary contact and coordinate the district's entry.

Once registered, you'll receive additional information about photo submissions, tree setup and removal, important deadlines, and public voting.

Registration Deadline: Friday, November 13, 2026

Questions? Contact Friends of Portsmouth: hello@friendsofportsmouth.com

Let's fill Market Street with Christmas cheer, celebrate our incredible Scioto County schools, and make this holiday season Merry & Bright! 🎄

