

Good NEIGHBORS

A Publication of the East Troy Area Chamber of Commerce

EASTTROY.ORG

NOVEMBER 2025

VOLUME 36, EDITION 4

It's East Troy's most magical season of all



Month-long interactive Light Show is back & better than ever

Imagine a snow-kissed town square shimmering beneath bright lights, shop windows aglow and the sounds of classic holiday music filling the crisp winter air. It's the kind of picture-perfect holiday moment you'd expect to see on the Hallmark Channel – only right here at home, the magic is real thanks to East Troy Lights.

"Each December, downtown East Troy becomes the stage for made-for-the-movies moments," said Vanessa Lenz, East Troy Chamber of Commerce Executive Director.

The interactive and imaginative

light display experience will kick off Saturday, Dec. 6, when Santa comes to East Troy via the 117-year-old East Troy Electric Railroad Santa Parade Train to light the annual Bob Barutha Memorial Christmas Tree.

Lights will continue daily with shows at 7 p.m. through Dec. 31.

The East Troy Area Chamber of Commerce is boosting the magic factor in 2025 with the expansion of the East Troy Lights Candy Cane Adventure, as well as the fan favorite East Troy Lights Live shows. Watch East Troy Lights come to life with this special immersive show at 7 p.m. on Fridays & Saturdays in December.

Inspired by the timeless musicals and winter wonderlands, this immersive experience will capture the spirit of the season.

"We plan to put on quite a show

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

Your holidays aren't complete without a visit to East Troy Lights – an interactive holiday light display, which kicks off when Santa comes to town on Saturday, Dec. 6. Left: Lowen Newhouse watches the lights come to life at East Troy Village Square Park. East Troy Lights will feature timed shows on the hour at 7 p.m. Dec. 6-31 with the option to play songs on demand.

DOGS AND DREAMS Good Neighbors



Santa, Mrs. Claus and their entourage will make their annual journey to East Troy aboard the East Troy Electric Railroad's Santa Parade Train on Saturday, Dec. 6. The lighting of the Bob Barutha Community Christmas Tree and debut of year 6 of East Troy Lights will take place at 6:30 p.m. at East Troy Village Square Park.

EMILY FRAME PHOTOGRAPHY Good Neighbors

Santa Claus is coming to town by rail Dec. 6

Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus and their entourage will kick off the holiday season in East Troy on Saturday, Dec. 6 via the East Troy Electric Railroad's Santa Train.

The beautifully lit four-car train will travel down the century-old interurban trolley line between Mukwonago and East Troy, which leaves the Elegant

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

A Heart as Big as Her Smile

Pease encourages kindness with donations to local groups

For generations of East Troy students, the name Mrs. Pease brings to mind a smile that can light up a room, a voice as gentle as her heart, and sometimes the cheerful sparkle of a little red clown nose.

Francine Pease, a former speech pathologist in the East Troy Community School District and beloved local character known as "Ditsy the Clown," has once again brought joy to her adopted hometown – this time with a \$100,000 donation to seven local charities and community projects.

The gift will be divided among local non-profits, including the East Troy All Sports Booster Club in memory of Brad Mysliwski, East Troy Music Boosters in memory of Cathy Trader, East Troy Family and Community Resource Center in memory of Carolyn Joas and in honor of Marolyn Komperud, East Troy Education Foundation in honor of

Barbara Jeffries, St. Peter's Catholic Church Helping Hands in memory of Gary Hamilton and honor of Diane Hamilton, East Troy Area Intergenerational Community Center in honor of Martha Bresler and Theresa Barrett and the Village of East Troy Skate Park in honor of Sue and Gary Budzien.

Pease sought to honor and preserve the memory of those who inspired her by naming an honoree for each nonprofit she supported.

"I wanted to give the money away while I'm alive so I can see the benefits of it," Pease, 85, said. "It's very gratifying to me to see that. East Troy was so good to me. It was payback time."

Setting East Troy Roots

Pease came to East Troy in 1972, returning two years later to spend more than two decades in the district. As a speech and language teacher, she helped countless children find their voices. Pease said she was often inspired by her own experience overcoming a speech impediment.

"I went into the field because of my own speech problem," she said. "I



Francine Pease

didn't want my students to go through what I went through. Being a speech teacher, I wanted to teach them how to communicate and to help them better their lives."

She quickly became a fixture in classrooms and community events alike.

Her alter ego, "Ditsy the Clown," was a crowd favorite at school events and parades, reminding kids and adults not to take themselves too seriously.

"Ditsy's favorite phrase was, 'We all make mistakes, and that's okay,'" Pease said with a laugh. "I had the best time as Ditsy."

A Lifetime of Giving

Over the years, Pease has quietly built a remarkable record of generosity.

At the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, she established two scholarships: one in memory of her late husband and UW-Whitewater professor, Joseph J. Pease, and another for juniors and seniors in the College of Arts and Communication.

Pease has donated tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships to students with financial need, saying she takes joy in helping them achieve their dreams.

She also helped establish the Francine L. Pease East Troy Skatepark, was a major contributor to East Troy's baseball concession stand, and through the years has provided funds to both public and private schools for library books,

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

“We all need to be kind to one another, look out for one another and share our generosity in whatever forms we are able with the time that we have.”

Francine Pease