

Traditions: Local celebrities share theirs

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around 3 o'clock."

"We just relax. Christmas Day is the only day I don't have to work. The rest of the year is so crazy.

"We always go to Stone Mountain Park and ride the train, go to the hot dog weenie roast and see whatever spectaculars they have.

"Ever since my brother has been in the military, every holiday season we make boxes to send to the troops overseas. This will be our seventh year.

"I'm cooking this year for Thanksgiving: turkey breasts and an amazing mac-and-cheese recipe that [former Wilson Phillips member] Carnie Wilson gave me. It has 19 ingredients.

"On Dec. 16, I'm doing the Atlanta Special Citizens party. It's a party for all of the disabled people in Atlanta. I've performed there every year since I was 8-years old."

Monica Pearson

WSB-TV anchor and host of the Lighting of Macy's Great Tree.

"We have a couple of traditions in our family that started when my 27-year-old daughter was a toddler. In keeping with the season, Claire only gets three gifts from her parents, to remember the Three Wise Men and their gifts to the Baby Jesus.

Also, Santa does bring her one gift, even at 27, and leaves it under the tree — and he always signs the card!

We go to services Christmas Eve at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church and open one gift as soon as we get home from church. And every year, I take a picture of Claire in front of the tree Christmas morning, when we open gifts with my now 84-year-old mother.

[Another of our] traditions is the menu: Turkey, giblet gravy, oyster dressing, collard greens, four-cheese macaroni and cheese, candied yams and sweet tea, followed by pumpkin pie and yes, I make everything except the pie."

Rhubarb Jones

Morning-show host on Eagle 106.7 and annual host of the ribbon-cutting of Priscilla the Pink Pig at Lenox Square.

"On Christmas Eve, my wife, Donna, and I read 'The Christmas Story' to the girls and tell them that Christmas is more than Santa Claus and getting presents. It's all about the greatest gift any of [us] has ever received, the birth of Jesus, when God gave His only son to be our guardian. Then on Christmas morning, we open presents with the girls and it is such a thrill. We gather at our house late in the afternoon and Donna's family comes over to eat, visit and share Christmas as a family."



Chris Kayser

Popular Atlanta actor known for portraying Scrooge in the Alliance Theatre's production of "A Christmas Carol." He has performed the play on Atlanta stages for 22 years (15 as Scrooge).

"First off, both of my kids Jacob and Noelle were born on Dec. 23, so we have a lot to celebrate. Every Christmas and Thanksgiving, the entire family works at Turner Field with Hosea Feed the Hungry. We serve food in the morning and later go to my wife's father's house for a great family meal."



Marty Mercer

Motivational speaker and leader of the Briefcase Brigade, a popular group that marches in the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Christmas Parade.

"For probably the last 10 years, my family has attended Christmas Eve Mass at Christ the King Cathedral in the late afternoon or early evening. Then we head over to my sister-in-law's condo and she serves us up a gourmet meal and we say grace by each person reading a small snippet of the birth of Christ. Then the two local aunts come spend the night at my family's house. The next morning, we wake up and we always cook the same egg-casserole dish and french toast dish, and we open presents, eat some more, open more presents, eat some more ... and end the day by watching "White Christmas" with Bing and Rosemary Clooney."



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heard then handed the inmate a cellphone and asked him to contact a family member to get the money. It was well known around the prison that the inmate, Darryl Butler, had just received a large settlement for a worker's compensation case, Baggett said.

Butler's sister, a schoolteacher from

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For the sake of tradition

By **KERI SMITH** / kesmith@ajc.com

Atlanta's holiday season is filled with familiar faces, from friends, to family — to Monica Pearson, who hosts the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

We asked several folks who play a role in some Atlanta holiday traditions to share their favorite personal holiday traditions.

Diana DeGarmo

"American Idol" star and former Broadway cast member of "Hairspray." Will appear in CMT series "Gone Country" in January.

"My mom and I are probably the most nontraditional family out there. We order takeout on Christmas Eve. We always go to the 11 o'clock service at church.

"On Christmas morning, we sleep in. We come downstairs with our pajamas on and make breakfast. We open presents when we get around to it — probably



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Rick Badie

Suwanee man helps others deal with loss of sibling. **J3**

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