



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Ozark National Scenic Riverways

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Ozark National Scenic Riverways News Release

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Van Buren Elementary Third Graders Celebrate *An Ozark Christmas* at Ozark National Scenic Riverways

Van Buren, MO – Christmas is a favorite time of year for many people. The smell of freshly baked cookies, snowflakes falling softly to the ground and twinkling lights around every corner remind us of special memories of years past. In honor of the season, Ozark National Scenic Riverways was pleased to host *An Ozark Christmas* Sunday, December 9th, 2012.

The holiday season was kicked off with the official lighting of the park Christmas tree by Superintendent Bill Black. Family, school faculty and students gathered to listen to the Van Buren 3rd graders sing Christmas carols and the reading of Ozark Christmas stories created by the students. Ol' Saint Nick dropped in for a visit.

Preparations for the event began weeks ago as the Van Buren 3rd graders studied past Ozark Christmas traditions with their teachers and Park Ranger, Cathy Runge. After gaining an understanding of their unique Ozark heritage, the students created their own traditional Ozark Christmas ornaments to decorate the park Christmas tree. The students also wrote stories about their Ozark Christmas traditions and the winning essays received gift cards. The winners of the Essay Contest were Audrey Aldridge (1st place), Katie Griffin (2nd place), and Jessica Mays (3rd place). A special thank you goes to all the 3rd grade students for their hard work and to those who contributed to the memorable event.

For more information, phone (573) 323-4236 during business hours Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm or visit the park's website at www.nps.gov/ozar. Ozark National Scenic Riverways preserves the free-flowing Current and Jacks Fork Rivers, the surrounding natural resources, and the unique cultural heritage of the Ozark people.



Pictured: Van Buren 3rd Grade Students; Teachers – Susan Dunn, Amy Jackson, and David Russell; Van Buren Principal – Rick Johnson; and National Park Service Staff – Bill Black and Cathy Runge

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