

The Kriskindlmarkt Post

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10 Years of Sparta Kriskindlmarkt:

A Festive Tradition

The traditional European-style outdoor market, known as Sparta Kriskindlmarkt, has grown significantly since its inception in 2015. Here's a look at its evolution:

EARLY YEARS (2015-2017)

- **2015:** The seven-hut market began as a two-weekend event held in a vacant lot on North Water Street.
- **2016:** The market expanded to three weekends and saw improvements to the original stage, including the addition of a rigid back wall and decorative eyebrow roof.
- **2017:** The site on North Water Street was affectionately named Mueller Square. The stage area underwent more improvements, with the newest addition being a roof and awning structure.

CONTINUED GROWTH (2018-2020)

- **2018:** An eighth permanent hut in Mueller Square was constructed, as well as five collapsible huts to be placed on the Water Street Bridge.

- **2019:** No significant changes were made.
- **2020:** The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the event, but due to the increased interest in outdoor activities, it drew the largest attendance to date. The market continued to grow with the formation of Creekside Commons including an information kiosk as well as three more permanent huts. The newly reconstructed Love Lock Bridge over Beaver Creek provided a picturesque backdrop for Creekside.

RECENT YEARS (2021-2024):

- **2021:** The Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce took over the event and expanded it to four weekends. Creekside Commons received decorative pavers, and six new collapsible huts were added.
- **2022:** The Sausage Hut, an octagonal structure, made its debut.
- **2023:** The Sausage Hut was renamed the Wurst Hausl, and the neighboring Bier Hausl was constructed. The Bier Hausl was the grandest temporary structure to date due to its bell tower and elaborate lighting. The Love

Lock Bridge grew in importance as it became an important connector to the new Love Lock Village which consisted of five collapsible huts as well as the addition of a beloved Build-Your-Own-S'mores station in the Beaver Creek Meadow, a crowd favorite with the children.

- **2024:** The tenth year of the market marks its largest yet with the expansion of the Love Lock Village including six more collapsible huts, a new stage, a food booth, and a paved stage area in the Beaver Creek Meadow. The Mueller Square stage was also raised and the roof was extended, transforming the area into a new concessions area for festive food and drink.

CURRENT STATE

As of 2024, the Sparta Kriskindlmarkt offers a variety of food and beverage options, as well as unique shopping opportunities. It features 11 permanent huts, 22 collapsible huts, and 9 food and beverage outlets. In total, over 40 huts will serve the public in Downtown Sparta for its tenth anniversary. This year's market will open for the season at 2 p.m. on Nov. 29.

The History of Mueller Square

Research by
Monroe County Title and Monroe
County Local History Room

The southern lot at 118-120 N. Water St. has been a number of different businesses over the years.

The original building was a double one-story frame building construct-

ed in 1858. The south half of it was the Sparta Post Office. The north half was used as the original site of the Bank of Sparta from 1858-1860.

It is interesting to note that at the time of the former Post Office demolition it was the oldest standing building in Sparta in 1936, having stood for 74 years.

While the current post office was built in 1915, the demolition of its former location would make way for the Sparta Theatre which was the second theatre from a group originating this business in Waupaca, WI. Svirnoff & Marcus Amusement

'MUELLER'
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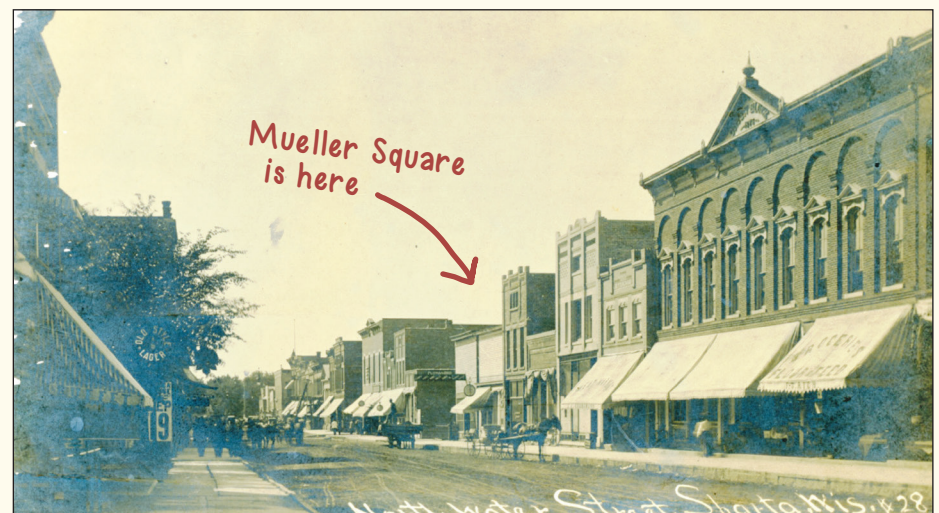


Photo of North Water Street in Downtown Sparta looking south, circa 1907. Contributed photo by Monroe County Local History Room.

History of Sparta Kriskindlmarkt: Early Directors and Organizers

TIM HYMA

Tim Hyma was the Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce Director when Kriskindlmarkt began. He expressed that from its humble beginnings of seven huts, which was a big deal back then, he is so proud of what The Showmen and the supporting community has been able to do behind the scenes to make it grow into what it has become today.

JOHN HENDRICKS

John Hendricks, the Chamber Director that brought Kriskindlmarkt into the fold of Discover Wisconsin fame, said this of the winter market:

“Kriskindlmarkt is an important part of the rebirth of Sparta’s downtown. To me it also represents the most visible example of grassroots, civic pride.”

Hendricks was succeeded as director by Heidi Prestwood, who was in office at the time when the Kriskindlmarkt volunteer organization handed the reins over to the Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce in 2020. Prestwood led the Kriskindlmarkt charge until her resignation in 2024. Hendricks was re-installed as interim director and will oversee the 2024 market.

SKIP AND NANCY FRAZEE

Skip and Nancy Frazee were founding members of the original Sparta Kriskindlmarkt.

Skip relates, “Nancy and I do remember brainstorming with Reinhard and Mike and Amy Bernath about what could be done to get more people downtown to help the Sparta merchants

during the holiday season. Walmart, the malls, and the Internet had changed Sparta’s downtown. When Nancy and I were growing up in the late 50s and 60s there were three hardware stores, three shoe stores, two dime stores, a couple of pharmacies, a bakery or two, two jewelry stores, two movie theaters, several banks and several clothing stores in downtown Sparta.

People needed a reason to come and shop in downtown Sparta.

Mike and Amy Bernath had lived in Germany and had experienced Christmas markets, and Reinhard also had experienced them with his German heritage. The idea then became what is now known as Kriskindlmarkt.”

MIKE AND AMY BERNATH

Founding member Amy Bernath shared: “It all started with an empty lot on Water Street, some fond memories, a few good friends, and a fella by the name of Reinhard Mueller. The lot was an eyesore, Reinhard and the Sparta Downtown Cooperative were trying to attract more business to and interest in the downtown area, and the friends had been reminiscing about their experiences at traditional Holiday Markets in Europe. Wouldn’t it be nice if...? How could we explain the concept? How could we go about it? What would the people of Sparta think? What would it cost? Could we even find local crafters for vendors? Can we come up with authentic-looking booths? How

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‘MUELLER’ continued from pg. 1

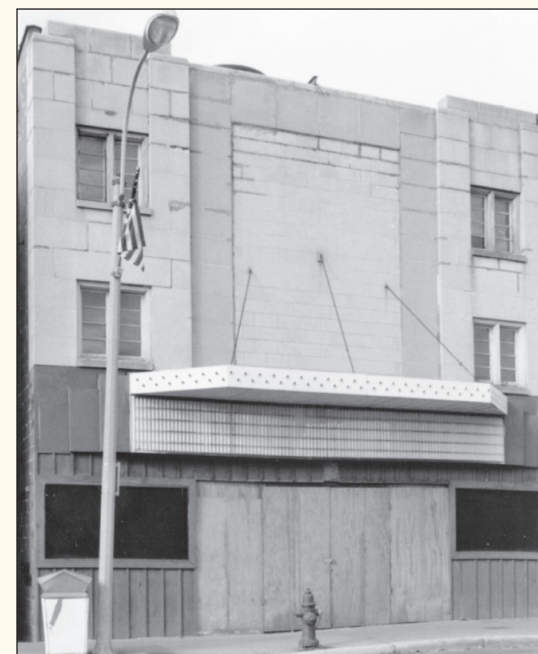
would sell their interest to Sparta Theatre before the building would be completed.

Some of the other businesses located in that building include Sparta Herald, a carpenter shop, a couple of different millineries, a Bee Hive Store, Grand Rapids Milling Co. branch office, and a U. S. Army Store. The last business in the 1858 building was E. N. Botsford’s U. S. Army Store, which closed in the summer of 1936. The building was razed shortly afterwards, and a two-story brick building was constructed for the new Sparta Theatre on both plots, 118 and 120 North Water Street. Part of the theatre building was damaged by fire in January 1946. The theatre remained open until the mid-1980s.

The northern lot of the trio 118, 120 and 122 N. Water St. also has been several different businesses over the years. There is no record as to when the first building was constructed there. It’s mentioned as the Will Baldwin building by 1896. That building was destroyed by fire in August 1898, which also caused damage to the building at 120 N. Water. A. C. Arthur operated a grocery store in the building prior to the fire. In December 1898, L. A. Herrick purchased the lot and began plans to construct a two-story brick veneer building there to be used as his jewelry store the following spring. In 1908, the central office of the Bell long distance telephone line was moved into Herrick’s jewelry store. Herrick’s store closed sometime between 1908 and 1916. Afterwards, the building contained a couple of different millineries and hardware stores. The building later became the Spartan Bar, which closed in June 1944. A few other bars occupied the building until at least 2007, including: Walt’s Bar, Freddie’s Bar, Herb’s Bar, Duffit’s Bar, Main Trail Saloon, The Party House, and The After Dark.

Leading up to the first year of the Kriskindlmarkt in 2015, all three parcels had been razed and turf was well established. The southern two parcels, once the theatre, had been fenced in by a tall board fence to provide privacy to a beer garden within. The After Dark was razed on Oct 23, 2012 due to deteriorating building conditions and concern for public safety.

The Sparta Improvement Corporation was responsible for removing the old theatre as it was decrepit and an eyesore. This was essentially a group of community leaders all chipping in to fund the removal. The registered agent for this corporation was



The Sparta Theater as it was in 1989. Contributed photo from the Monroe County Local History Room.

Timothy Masters. The participants beyond Mary & Dennis Knoll, Harlan & Sandra Perry, and Gene & Dorothy Arenz are not known.

The Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce realigned its committees in May of 2015 from which came the Downtown Cooperative.

This organization was focused on improving the infrastructure of the downtown through promotion and utilization of existing grants to make the downtown more inviting. Other efforts included input from outside advisers that offered ideas to bring more life to the downtown. This culminated in the Downtown Cooperative placing 7 Bavarian huts on the property discussed herein as “squatters,” using the space to provide more activity in the Sparta downtown, promoted as Kriskindlmarkt in the first part of December 2015.

The booths were fully intended to be moved at the close of the fest having been built on skids. The interest that followed the first Kriskindlmarkt carried into the spring of 2016 when the Sparta Farmers Market would call this area home. The events that followed during the Christmas of 2016 and into the spring of 2017 set Mueller Square onto its current trajectory and use.

In the Spring of 2017, the Sparta City Council would take specific action to make these two tracts of land a city park to be named Mueller Square. Improvements to include permanent power distribution, pavement, and a center awning would immediately commence.

The Story of Glühwein Mugs

One of the best known and most celebrated parts of European Christmas markets are the custom mugs available to be filled with mulled wine from numerous locations within the market. Rum or other spirits can be purchased as enhancements, which serve to make the experience just that more interesting.

The mugs almost always contain 200 milliliters of cheer, which translates to about 7 ounces. The mugs are made to order with the year and the market location, generally depicting well-known features of the town where the market is being held. There are no

paper or Styrofoam cups available, and if you do not want to keep your vessel, you just return it for the deposit you gave when you started on your path of imbibement.

Markets that are the size of Sparta typically have only one mug in circulation, and all outlets share in the issue and return of the mugs universally. While some locations may see more returns than others, it is safe to say that the mugs will all vanish by the time Christmas comes around. Larger markets have a variety of styles, and those styles can only be returned to an origin that offers that style. You may ask that if they are so popular, what happens should

the market run out before Christmas? Well Virginia, that's where the undated "emergency mugs" come in to be used if the ones produced for a particular year are sold out. In no case do the Europeans break out the plastic ware, and booths that serve gluehwein are fitted with dishwashers.

HISTORY OF SPARTA KRISKINDLMARKT MUGS

The first Kriskindlmarkt held in Sparta in 2015 was festooned with mugs as well. While not exactly what we were hoping for in the likeness of the European form, they serve as a wonderful memory of where we started. Provided by P&P Products, Kim

Bowen worked hard to find a shape that was more cylindrical, and we settled on what is more like a teacup. The deciding point was the volume, as 7 ounces was our target. The design would come from Norb Brown, and was a drawing of the Beaver Creek Covered Bridge, which is adjacent to the original market location, and became the brand of the market for the next few years.

The 2016 Kriskindlmarkt had time to prepare for the real McCoy in terms of mugs, and we connected with a German manufacturer just south of Regensburg, Germany. Norb Brown would again design the 2016 themed

logo, which was a hut with a sleigh and a Christmas tree nearby. The mugs were ready for pick-up in November of 2016, and Kerry Schumann and Reinhard Mueller would travel to Germany on the day after the election to carry the mugs home. When they arrived at the plant in Schierling, Germany, much to their surprise, the mugs were ordered as standard coffee mugs and not the 200 ml size that limits consumption. These were thusly supplemented in 2016 with silver goblets from P&P for those with small thirst, serving along-

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The 10th Anniversary Mug will be available for purchase at the Sparta Rotary Club booth at hut no. 8. This year's mug was designed by Logan Everson. Contributed photo by Mohaba.

2024 SCHEDULE & DIRECTORY

Kriskindlmarkt is open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Fridays, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturdays
 Different vendors between Friday and Saturday are separated by a slash, i.e. Friday Vendor/Saturday Vendor

VENDORS	Nov. 29 (open at 2 p.m.)/Nov. 30	Dec. 6/Dec. 7	Dec. 13/Dec. 14	Dec. 20/Dec. 21
#1	Blackhouse Quilting	GiGi's Creations/Blackhouse Quilting	Pine View Farms	Pine View Farms/Lola's Cupcakes
#2	Simple in Nature	Simple in Nature	Simple in Nature	Simple in Nature
#3	Dave's Coffee Cake	Freckled Fern Crafted Crochet/Chris's Creations	Little Angels' Apparel/Kitchypoo	Cakes by Kolbo/Chris's Creations
#4	Confluence Craft and Co.	Wisc Beverage Koozies	Schell Farm Gardens/Scholze Family Beef	Schell Farm Gardens/Scholze Family Beef
#5	Roasted Candied Nuts served by Kiwanis Club of Sparta (Cashews, Pecans, and Almonds) 🍷			
#6	The Cupcake Shack	Gondola Gardens	Northwoods Country Market/Uncle Tom's Kitchen	Northwoods Country Market/Uncle Tom's Kitchen
#7	Globuzz Designs	Globuzz Designs	Globuzz Designs	Globuzz Designs
#8	Commemorative Mugs and Glühwein served by Sparta Rotary Club 🍷			
Stage (L)	Craft Beer served by Alchemy Brewing Co. 🍷			
Stage (R)	Gyros, Döner Kabobs, and Soup served by Sparta Lions Club 🍷			
TSO*	Cider and Bake Sale by Family Promise of Monroe County/Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce Info			
#9	Put A Salve On It/1924 Custom Soapery	The Pearl	1924 Custom Soapery/Put a Salve On It	Put a Salve On It/1924 Custom Soapery
#10	Carol Ostrem	Gertsch Alpacas	Gertsch Alpacas	Ashley & Carolyn's Sweet Creations
#11	Aislin & Anna/Simply B Candle Co	My Two Hands Designs	Aislin & Anna/TDAK Artistry	Freckled Fern Crafted Crochet/ TDAK Artistry
#12	Mike's Farm to Table	Mike's Farm to Table	Mike's Farm to Table	Mike's Farm to Table
#13	My Two Hands Designs	1924 Custom Soapery/Put a Salve On It	SHS DECA/Carol Ostrem	Natty West
#14	2200° Pottery	2200° Pottery	2200° Pottery	2200° Pottery
#15	Wandering Sheep Beard Care/FurLife Fashions	Muffin Waffle Crafts/Northwoods Country Market	Muffin Waffle Crafts/Gigi's Creations	Muffin Waffle Crafts
#16	Burlap & Bows	Burlap & Bows	Burlap & Bows	Burlap & Bows
#17	Crunchy Cravings	KandyGraham	Crunchy Cravings	KandyGraham
#18	Sage & Bailey Herbals	Sage & Bailey Herbals	Sage & Bailey Herbals	Sage & Bailey Herbals
#19	Pinetree Primitives	Dave's Coffee Cake	Dana's Kitchen/Jeff's Woodturnings	LemonMade Custom Shop/The Crafty Corner
#20	Woof Naturals	Woof Naturals	Woof Naturals	Woof Naturals
#21	Local Buzz, Low Ridge Honey	Local Buzz, Low Ridge Honey	Local Buzz, Low Ridge Honey	Local Buzz, Low Ridge Honey
#22	December Flower Tarot & Creations/Once Upon A Sheep Handknits		Sew Ewe	Crunchy Cravings/Kitchypoo
Kiosk (L)	Schnitzel, Cheese Curds, Walking Tacos, and Hot Chocolate served by Sparta Lions Club 🍷			
Kiosk (R)	Soft Pretzels by Sparta Trailblazers Snowmobile Club 🍷			
Wurst Hausl	Sausages, Brats, and Hot Dogs served by Church of Birch 🍷			
Bier Hausl	Craft Beer, Glühwein, and Cider served by Beer Shop 🍷			
#23	JoJo's Creations/KandyGraham	Schell Farm Gardens	JoJo's Creations/Castle Creations	Flour Power Bakery/Velvet Couch Candle
#24	Good Granola	SoFull Chai	SoFull Chai/ Bucket of Bread	Sunflower Studio/ Bucket of Bread
#25	Natty West	Nordmark Designs	Natty West	Dave's Coffee Cake/Sunflower Studio
#26	VRCR Sales	Emai Concrete Designs	VRCR Sales	VRCR Sales
#27	Distance Brand	LemonMade Custom Shop/Mama T's Baked Goods	LemonMade Custom Shop/Schoolhouse Maple Syrup	Huckleberries
#28	Alkota Russian Treasures	TDAK Artistry/Jeff's Woodturnings	December Flower Tarot & Creations/5 Guys With Some Stuff	BS Designs LAX
#29	Mel's Rustic Cottage	Mel's Rustic Cottage	Mel's Rustic Cottage	Mel's Rustic Cottage
#30	Flame Kissed Salmon served by Montessori, SAILS, and Boys & Girl's Club			
#31	Cookies & Cream Cafe	Cookies & Cream Cafe	Cookies & Cream Cafe	Cookies & Cream Cafe
#32	ReLAX Bath & Body, ReLAX Wisco	Dr. Sarah's Essentials	ReLAX Bath & Body, ReLAX Wisco	ReLAX Bath & Body, ReLAX Wisco
#33	Golddiggers Crystals	Golddiggers Crystals	Golddiggers Crystals	Golddiggers Crystals
Kiosk (L)	Crepes and Potato Pancakes served by Montessori, SAILS, and Boys & Girl's Club 🍷			
Kiosk (R)	Handly's Old Fashioned Glazed Donuts 🍷			
Drink Trailer	Craft Beer served by Cataract Essential Services 🍷			
S'mores	Build-Your-Own-S'mores Station served by the Sparta Back Pack Program 🍷			
	*The Shovelmen Office located at 114 N. Water St., south of Mueller Square			

ENTERTAINMENT	Nov. 29/Nov. 30	Dec. 6/Dec. 7	Dec. 13/Dec. 14	Dec. 20/Dec. 21
Still Nacht Stage in Love Lock Village	6 p.m. Sparta Mennonite Festival Singers 7 p.m. Silent Monks	7 p.m. Silent Monks	1 p.m. Bluff Country Tale Spinners (Sat. only) 4 p.m. W.I.N. Carolers 6 p.m. SHS Vocal Jazz Choir (Sat. only) 7 p.m. Silent Monks	1 p.m. Bluff Country Tale Spinners (Sat. only) 6 p.m. (Sat)/7 p.m. (Fri.). Sparta Mennonite Festival Singers 7 p.m. New Lisbon HS Chamber Singers (Sat. only)

The Grinch and Santa Claus will make appearances every weekend.

Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides to Holiday Lights in Evans Bosshard Park every Weekend, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., pick-up at Main St. Entrance. Time will vary on Fri. Dec. 6 due to Holiday Parade.

Stop by the new **Alpen Globes in Love Lock Village** to rent a private space to celebrate with friends and family. 🌟

Fire Watchers **Lucas Kham, John Foshey, Barrett & Roy Burlingame, Walmart, DECA**

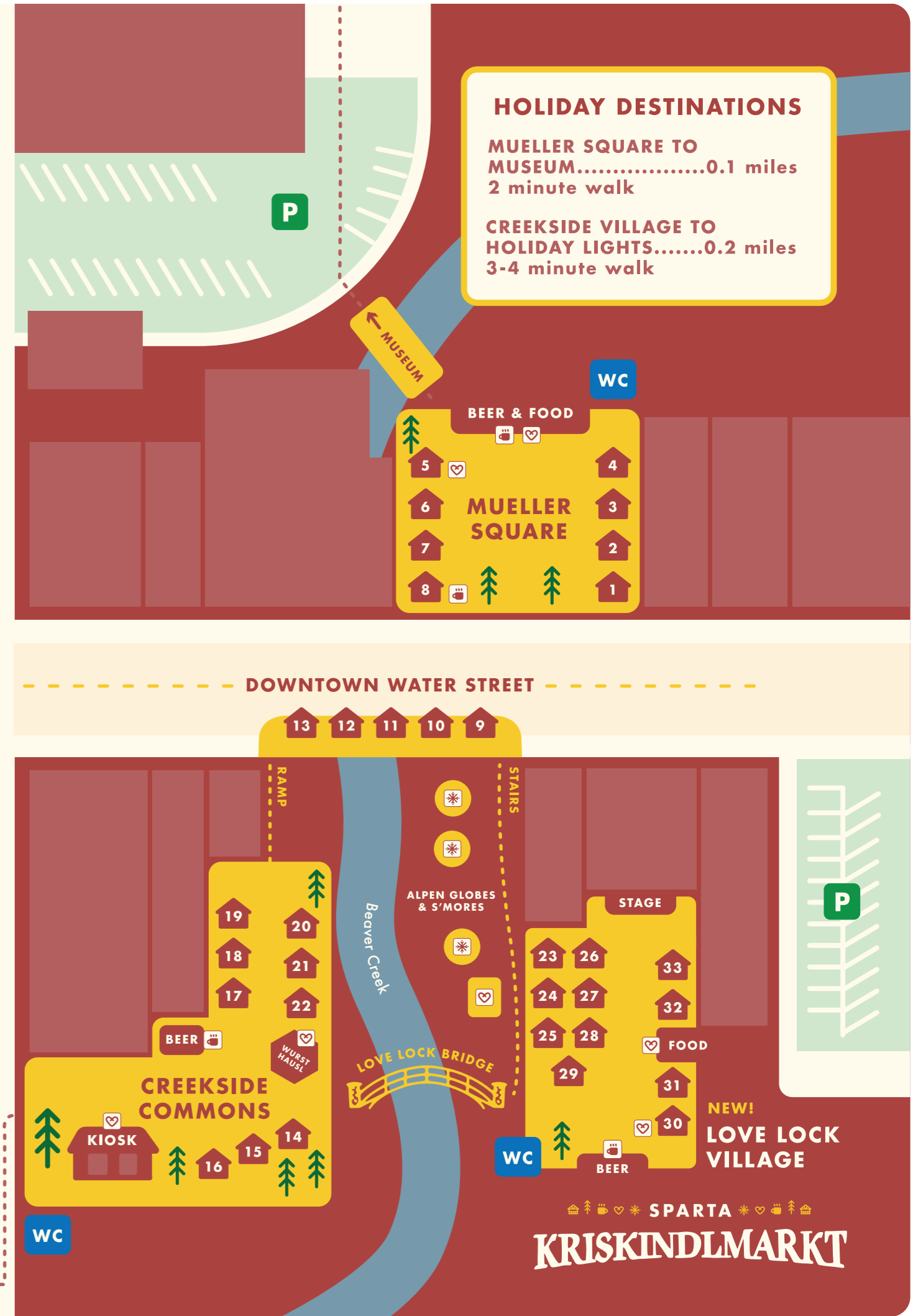
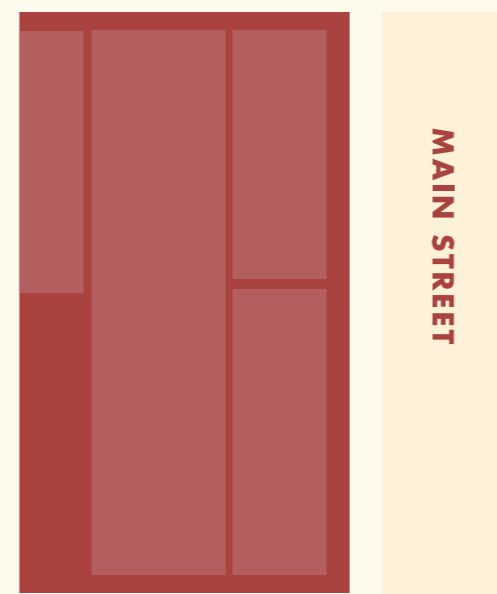
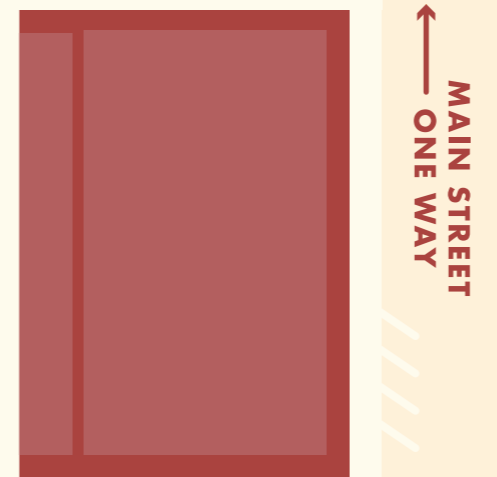
FRIDAYS
4 p.m. – 8 p.m.



SATURDAYS
10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

KEY

- P** PARKING
- WC** TOILET
- #** VENDOR HUTS
- 🍷** GLÜHWEIN UND BIER
- 🍷** FOOD
- ❄️** ALPEN GLOBES



HOLIDAY DESTINATIONS

MUELLER SQUARE TO MUSEUM.....0.1 miles
2 minute walk

CREEKSIDE VILLAGE TO HOLIDAY LIGHTS.....0.2 miles
3-4 minute walk

🏠🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷 SPARTA 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷
KRISKINDLMARKT

A Vendor's Perspective

Contributed by
Sarah Kernan
2200° Pottery



For me, it all started at Kriskindlmarkt. Our family moved to Sparta in 2016.

I didn't discover Kriskindlmarkt until a couple years later when my son was involved with the Sparta High School Vocal Jazz group who performed one evening. They filled Mueller Square with their upbeat Christmas carols. The twinkling lights and decorations made it feel like such a magical place. After singing, the kids went for a horse and wagon ride; yet another perfect detail to make Kriskindlmarkt an amazing experience.

I had to go back to get a better look at the vendors in their beautiful huts. It was like a Hallmark movie strolling through the square and the bridge with cups of cocoa to warm our hands.

We came across a potter and after a brief chat, found out that he had a studio in La Crosse where we could take a class as a family. Our family of four signed up for a January class and it was my first time ever throwing clay on a wheel. We all had a blast and took home several very simple dishes after he fired them for us.

Months later, I was yearning for more time on that pottery wheel and started weekly classes in September of 2019. Only a few months into my classes, Covid hit and the classes were discontinued. I spent a few months just playing on my own, teaching my-



Market guests visit Sarah's first booth in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, masks were highly encouraged. **Herald photo by Logan Everson.**

self through trial and error and some youtube videos. By the summer of 2020, I had purchased myself the equipment I needed to have my own home studio.

I practiced and practiced that year, making so many mugs that my husband told me that we couldn't keep them all.

So I thought, "What better place to share my work than the place I found my new passion? Kriskindlmarkt!"

2020 was my very first time as a vendor with Kriskindlmarkt and I have returned each year since.

As a vendor, I get to see hundreds of people each day. We smile at each other and wish each other Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas.

By now, many faces are familiar because they visit me every year. Some of them just stop by to say hi and some of them make a point to get a mug or an ornament from me each year. I love watching people have the same experience I had the first time I came to Kriskindlmarkt. Families with bundled up

children. People who bring their pets in the most adorable festive outfits. Friends gathered by one of our cozy fires with that year's cup of glühwein. Kids excited to get s'mores and see Santa Claus or the Grinch. Crepes, pretzels, and the smell of roasted spiced nuts filling the air. One of my favorite parts is that so many people are shopping locally, buying things made by their friends and neighbors and supporting our local non-profit groups.

It has been the most rewarding experience so when the Sparta Chamber of Commerce announced that they wanted to create a governance board for overseeing the market, I jumped at the chance to participate. We want to make Kriskindlmarkt warm and inviting for everyone. We hope that there is something for everyone to enjoy. There's always a warm drink at Kriskindlmarkt, but I also think that Kriskindlmarkt feels like a warm hug for everyone in the cold weather. I hope everyone loves it as much as I do.

'HISTORY'
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would we power it? How many people would it take to staff it? What about the heat? What about lighting and garlands and sound? Would we need a stage? Could we get a license to serve glühwein?

It took about a year to get it all together, but on Friday, December 4, 2015 the ribbon was cut and the first Sparta Kriskindlmarkt kicked off at 4 p.m. The empty lot contained seven vendor booths, festooned with garland and lights. The organizing committee had enticed, coerced, and even begged downtown businesses, local nonprofit organizations, community

service clubs, and local crafters to staff the booths, promote their organizations and sell their wares. No fees were charged, but it still took some arm twisting to staff the 3 available shifts for each booth for the two-weekend event.

Though far from the current size and scope of the current Kriskindlmarkt, the inaugural event was truly magic. The sights, sounds, and smells of those traditional European Holiday markets came to life in downtown Sparta. Even the most doubting of those vendors whose arms had been twisted asked if they could please return next year. Many attendees returned daily, and on closing night expressed regret that the event only ran two weekends.

The Organizing Committee's review and planning began immediately. What did we do right? What did we do wrong? What needs improving? How can we

make it better?

It took a village to build this village. Cooperation and support came from all corners of the community: the Sparta Downtown Cooperative, Sparta City Council, Sparta City Administrators, Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce, Sparta Police Department, Monroe County Publishers, the Sparta Free Public Library, Holiday Lights, Monroe County Historical Society, the Shovelmen, WCOW, Ginny's Cupboard, the Sparta Grill, and numerous individual volunteers.

Amy's personal observation: "What did the Kriskindlmarkt mean to me? Everything. And, without putting words in anyone

ORIGINAL KRISKINDLMARKT ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Reinhard Mueller

Sue Archer

Nancy & Skip Frazee

Amy & Mike Bernath

else's mouth, I think the other committee members felt the same way. We were all "all in" for the project. It was the equivalent

of hosting a two weekend Holiday party for the entire city. It brought us all together in the spirit of the season. It was a giant "Merry Christmas, Sparta!" from us to the city and community we love. We're thrilled with how the event has thrived and grown over the past three years, always looking for ways to make it bigger and better every year. The magic lives on."

REINHARD MUELLER AND SUSIE ARCHER

Reinhard Mueller and Susie offered: "Tim Hyma was the Chamber Director during the time of the first Kriskindlmarkt. Tim appointed Reinhard to be the leader of a chamber committee that was known

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as the Downtown Retail Committee, something he agreed to take on only as an infrastructure person, not as a true retailer. This was May 2015.

We formed the Downtown Cooperative and met regularly at Ginny's Cupboard to engage in things to improve the Sparta Downtown. We also had an interest in seeing that the facade loan program was being utilized, as drawing on those attractive and available funds had grown stale. Early projects were to revitalize what was transitioning from Angelini's Pizza to Italiano's, (which is now Kazoku Bistro), and a new storefront was created as a result.

During this time, Tim would show videos that were self-help tools to improve one's downtown. They spoke of busker booths to house start-up businesses, and just anything to create life downtown. In the summer of 2015 we traveled to Temecula, CA, and while there, witnessed a lot in the downtown that was filled with little huts from which people sold all sorts of trinkets. We got excited that this might work consistent with Tim's idea of creating busker booths for Sparta.

The Downtown Cooperative meetings were attended by Downtown retailers, Mike and Amy Bernath as well as Skip and Nancy Frazee, who were recently retired and were interested in how to make their hometown more successful. Both these couples had experienced Germany during their time there, and one day in the summer of 2015 after returning from Temecula, the discussion of the German Christmas Markets took place, and quickly overlaid upon the idea of busker

booths and what that could be like for Christmas.

It evolved quickly, and the Downtown Cooperative soon found itself organizing a Kriskindlmarkt what was built upon a vacant lot in what is now Mueller Square.

Brad Knoll became interested through the encouragement of his mother, Mary Knoll, that having such a market with its characteristic booths had great potential for Sparta. From the first booth model constructed, Brad built one full size mock-up which was a great inspiration. Brad would go on to construct four more on one Saturday where he organized the material and held a contest between four groups to see who could build a booth the fastest. The five booth shells were transported by Craig Sagehorn from their building site near the Chamber depot to the market and were placed by Al Jenkins and a telehandler to where they reside to this day.

The booths were built on skids with the full intention of removing them at the close of the market. Shovelmen Al Jenkins and Jerry Kast pitched in to build two more on site in the vacant lot before the first market commenced. Kerry Schumann and his daughter Cassie spent evenings working in the shop to build all the doors for the seven booths. The booth interiors were finished, and the exterior painted and decorated on site after being delivered by Craig Sagehorn.

The market was so well received that the Sparta Farmers Market leaders asked whether they could use them for the coming summer. They did move in, and the market has grown into the vibrant market which it is today. This rolled into the 2016 Kriskindlmarkt

which was the year in which the temporary stage was improved to become a permanent stage. In the year 2017 the City of Sparta officially made the property a park and named it Mueller Square.

This was also the year that the concrete and pavers were installed to a plan by Trish Schecterle and an awning design by Lisa Gaunky. The pavers and concrete were installed by the core Downtown Cooperative Christmas group, with a heavy assist from the Shovelmen.

The construction of the eighth permanent booth took place in 2018 in Mueller Square, as well as the construction of the first five collapsible huts on Water Street with the help of a capital fundraising effort lead by Susie. In 2019 we would travel to Germany for the last time to pick-up the custom designed mugs for the glühwein, a German mug tradition that came to an end with Covid and the sheer number of mugs that were desired.

COVID happened in 2020, which placed doubt on everything we knew. Throughout the summer, The Shovelmen would build the new Creekside area, with the Love Lock Bridge and the Kiosk, which was modeled upon a concept from a German-American village named Leavenworth, WA, along with three new permanent huts. This year would be produced by a partnership of the Chamber and the Rotary Club considering COVID. This would largely remain, in that the Chamber would singularly produce the event from 2021 on, having the resources necessary to nurture the development of the market. This year also brought the cobblestone area behind the barbershop

built by myself, Susie and the Shovelmen, as well as six new collapsible huts that created the Creekside area. This was also the first year of the Kiosk being a food venue, having been built one fine Saturday on somewhat of a whim.

The Sausage or "Wurst Haus!" it is now called, was erected in 2022. It was built with Dub's Sausage being behind the development together with a group of friends from the Beer Shop. This would also be the final year of the Beer Truck in the market, as the beauty of this presentation was improved for creature comfort through the Bier Haus! erected in 2023.

A major development occurred in 2023 in the area behind the Franklin Coffee House. The creation of five collapsible huts lined the sidewalk placed in 2020 and brought a large shift in the circulation dynamic, drawing people over the bridge and around the entire circle of the Beaver Creek Garden area.

An initial proponent of Kriskindlmarkt evidenced by her production of the 2015 poster, Jackie Jaeger of KEPS was approached to incorporate her parking area into the 2024 market. Her positive support together with that of the Franklin Coffee House allowed for the expansion which includes an additional six huts, a nativity scene, a food booth, a new stage, as well as salmon and beverage enclosures. The Beaver Creek Meadow also received infrastructure in the summer of 2024 to better support smores, and three Alpen Globe plastic igloos for groups to congregate. All of this has been made possible by a major fundraising effort in 2024, including the efforts of many community volunteers from all walks of the community.

I have 'Experienced the Magic... now what???

Strolling through this years' Kriskindlmarkt will take you longer than ever, especially with the added lingering opportunities such as the Alpen Globes, events on the new Silent Night (Stille Nacht) Stage, and much improved food and beverage service throughout the event grounds.

But there's even an end to Disney World, so here are some suggestions for what to do next.

- **Monroe County History Room and Museum** – Enjoy the tribute to 1980's Christmas
- **Sparta Free Library** – Ongoing Programs
- **Sparta Floral** has an exceptional greenhouse decorated for the season
- **Downtown Restaurants and Shopping**
- **See our seven beautiful bridges** throughout town, five of which are close to downtown
- **Stroll through the Holiday Lights** at Evans-Bosshard Park – only a short walk away

With new vendors each day of the eight day market, as well as different attractions, visit the market all eight days to be sure you don't miss anything!

'MUGS' continued from pg. 3

side the larger 10 oz coffee mugs.

2017 would bring a design by Lisa Gaunky depicting Mueller Square at Christmas. This time Susie Archer and Reinhard Mueller traveled to retrieve the mugs in Germany, which was growing to be 300 mugs by this time. They would fashion the cartons into carry-ons, using duct tape to create handles for at least four of the boxes, while the others went into suitcases.

2018 would again bring a design by Lisa Gaunky, this time depicting sites such as the Holiday Lights central building, Ben Bikin, and Mueller Square. The mug was cast in deep blue, and like 2017, would be a traditional shape which was tall and cylindrical.

The count was now 350 mugs, and when Susie Archer and Reinhard Mueller arrived at the factory, the order was nowhere to be found. They were ultimately produced the next day, and air freighted to Reinhard's uncle's house from where the two would depart back to America. The rest of the story was eventually found out in that the Sparta mugs were shipped to La Salle, IL in error. They must have been surprised when they opened the first box. They never did quite get over that experience, as they always felt a conspiracy was in play, refusing to sell the errant mugs to Sparta.

The last year of German mugs was 2019 and were in the style of a boot. These mugs were green and were fashioned with a design by Lisa Gaunky depicting the Beaver Creek Covered bridge in the foreground and the Sparta Free Library in the background.

There really was not anything more to tell about this experience, other than it was unplanned that this would be the last year, as COVID was about to strike.

COVID would strike in March of 2020, and all bets were off as to what this would mean for our fledgling Kriskindlmarkt. As the pandemic became more entrenched, and travel strictly prohibited, it became apparent that the mugs were not coming from Germany that year.

The Sparta Rotary ultimately found the mugs they wanted through an online retailer and purchased what would become a style that lasted for 4 years. The campfire mug was in red in 2020 and sported a completely new look with a design by Logan Everson that continues to be the core of our branding to this day. We also learned that year that having a mug that was recognizable to the Amer-

ARTISTS OF THE MUGS

2015: Norb Brown

2016: Norb Brown

2017: Lisa Gaunky

2018: Lisa Gaunky

2019: Lisa Gaunky

2020: Logan Everson

2021: Logan Everson

2022: Logan Everson

2023: Logan Everson

2024: Logan Everson

ican consumer was more sought after than a German style, as that was only understood by a handful of attendees. This contributed to the overwhelming popularity of this campfire style, starting with red in 2020, then blue in 2021, changing to green in 2022, and finally gray in 2023. Each year would have a custom design for the year, based on the core logo of 2020, and fashioned by Logan Everson.

The counts were going up as well from 500 in 2020 with a reorder, to 1200 in 2023, selling out by the

third weekend with no emergency cups to offer.

The 2024 mug experience was aided immeasurably by an example from the Grand Rapids, MI market. Traveling there during the disassembly of the market in 2023, Susie Archer and Reinhard Mueller were able to connect with promotional material that would take them to a company named Mohaba. Good thing that this was found when it was, as the mugs needed to be ordered by March 31 to arrive in Sparta on time.

The Governance Board for the Sparta Kriskindlmarkt accomplished this with a design by Logan Everson, which is proudly presented on the 2024 Kriskindlmarkt mug on the occasion of our tenth year. Given the long supply chain, there will be no reorders this year, so get them while they are available at hut no. 8 by the Sparta Rotary Club.



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