

HOLIDAY

Santa, tree lighting to headline Westover's first WinterFest

BY BEN CONLEY

Bconley@DominionPost.com

The city of Westover is planning a holiday party and Santa has already RSVP'd, so you know it's gonna be big.

A small group of volunteers led by Summer Hartley and City Councilor Shawna Cross are putting the finishing touches on the inaugural Westover WinterFest, an event organiz-

ers hope will become an annual tradition.

The festivities will take place from 3 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Dec. 15 at the Westover VFW, located at 340 Holland Ave.

Hartley said she made a list and has checked it at least twice - everything from the tree topper to the tablecloths are lining up nicely.

"Everything has been ordered. We got the ornaments

in. We got all the decorations. Things are good," she said.

The shindig will include cookies, hot cocoa and other snacks as well as games and activities for kids, a family photo booth, performances by the Motown Strutters and Morgan-town Dance and more.

It will culminate with Santa leading the lighting of the city's 14-foot live tree in a ceremony starting at 6 p.m.

Part of that ceremony will be the hanging of family ornaments currently on sale at the event's website wowinterfest.com. A portion of the proceeds will support next year's celebration.

"We're going to do a nice presentation of the ornaments. So, anyone who buys a personalized ornament, Santa will call out the family name and the family can come and hang the

ornament on the tree before the lighting," Hartley said.

A jolly old elf in his own right, Westover Mayor Bob Lucci is expected to offer remarks.

"It'll be very nice. I believe it will be. The goal is to have this first one and continue it," Lucci said. "Communication is going to be the key. If we really want people there, communication is a big thing."

THE PRIDE OF WEST VIRGINIA



Photo by Kevin McCormick/GroupPhotos.com

"The Pride of West Virginia" - The Mountaineer Marching Band performs in the 98th New York City Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The band had a prime spot in the parade lineup, just before Santa.

STREAMING REVIEW

Strong message in dialogue-free 'Robot Dreams'

SINCE BEST ANIMATED FILM BECAME A CATEGORY AT THE OSCARS IN 2002, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT YOU CAN COUNT ON. Studios like Pixar, Disney and Dreamworks will almost certainly be represented. There will usually be some kind of anime entry. And then there will be some obscure film that no one saw.

Last year, that movie was Pablo Berger's "Robot Dreams." But with this stunning movie now available on Hulu, more people will finally have the opportunity to see this absolutely delightful tale of friendship.

Dog is lonely. Every night he eats his microwave dinner alone in front of the television, seeing the others in the city snuggled up with someone they care about. So when he sees an ad for a robot companion, he jumps at the opportunity to find a new friend. When Robot arrives, the two become instant friends.

They play video games together, watch scary movies together, and put on elaborate roller skating routines together as they stroll the streets of 1980s New York City.

The drama comes when Dog and Robot visit the beach and are inadvertently separated when the beach closes for the season. They both have dreams of reuniting while they wait for the time when they will be together again.

"Robot Dreams" is one of the most poignant looks at friendship I have ever watched. There is no dialogue in this movie, with all emotion and plot being conveyed with the odd grunt or sigh, and some of the most beautiful hand-drawn animation you would want to see. Based on the graphic novel by Sara Varon, this film explores its subject matter beautifully, by tapping into the whimsy of dreams in a way that only animation can.

While not specifically



ALISE CHAFFINS

aimed at young viewers, this film will still appeal to some kids. The backgrounds are filled to the brim with extra characters for Dog and Robot to interact with, and it is visually spectacular. But where a lot of animated movies are for kids and adults to enjoy, this is a film that is for adults that kids can enjoy. There is humor and joy and tears aplenty in this movie.

Because "Robot Dreams" doesn't have dialogue, the soundtrack is important and this one is perfect. In a pivotal scene, "September" by Earth, Wind & Fire plays a prominent role, and then that theme is remixed throughout the remainder of the film so that by the end, you will never again be able to hear it without tearing up.

One of the biggest problems facing people today is loneliness. Despite the number of ways that we have to connect, we often don't know many people outside of our immediate orbit. "Robot Dreams" explores that sense of loneliness, but also the ways that friendships ebb and flow. The end left me breathless in the best way.

"Robot Dreams" is a silent film, but it still has a lot to say.

Alise Chaffins is a Morgantown film critic and author. She is a member of several critics organizations, including GALECA, OFTA and IFSCA. You can connect with her on social media at [AliseChaffins](https://www.instagram.com/AliseChaffins) and on her Substack at [MacGuffin or Meaning](https://www.substack.com/p/MacGuffin-or-Meaning).

CONNECT

MANAGING EDITOR: KATIE McDOWELL 304-291-9425

EMAIL: KMCDowell@DominionPost.com

breezeline™ Starting Sunday Dec 8th!

BINGO

Don't miss a day! Activate your digital subscription by visiting dominionpost.com/activate

4 28 33 7

BINGO