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CALLING ALL ELVES

SANTA CLAUS, IND----- As Christmas lights begin to appear and thoughts turn to the holiday season, a dedicated group of volunteers in the town of Santa Claus, Indiana, meets to begin yet another year of answering children's letters to Santa Claus. More and more letters arrive each year and Santa's Elves need your help to make sure each and every letter receives a response from Santa Claus.

"For over 100 years the town of Santa Claus has pulled together to help Santa answer letters," says Pat Koch, Chief Elf and founder of the Santa Claus Museum & Village, the headquarters for Santa's Elves. Records show that the first person to answer children's letters to Santa Claus was James Martin, who was appointed postmaster of Santa Claus, Indiana, in 1914. Subsequent postmasters, community groups, and individuals have ensured that the tradition has continued.

"The volume of letters increases each year," says Emily Thompson, Director of the Santa Claus Museum & Village. "We want to make sure every letter receives a response so we're asking local businesses, community groups, neighbors and friends to sign-up as volunteers and help us continue this important tradition."

Volunteer Elves are welcome on weekdays or weekends, during the day or the evening. Those interested in serving as volunteer elves should contact Thompson at the Santa Claus Museum & Village as soon as possible to schedule a date and time. Please email ethompson@santaclausmuseum.org or call 812-544-2434.

Children wishing to write to Santa should address their letters to: Santa Claus, P.O. Box 1, Santa Claus, IN 47579. All letters must be received by December 21, 2015 to receive a reply from Santa. The Elves also urge parents to ensure that a legible return address is included. Donations to help pay postage costs are welcome, and may be sent to the same address. In addition, families wishing to bring their children to the town of Santa Claus to write their letters may stop by the 1856 Post Office, located at the Santa Claus Museum & Village, on State Road 245 southeast of Holiday World. Examples of past letters, both funny and poignant, from the 1930s to the present are captured in the new book: "*Letters to Santa Claus*," now available at the museum.

Up to 15,000 letters are answered each year by Santa's Elves. The Christmasy letters and envelopes are printed and donated by Holiday World & Splashin' Safari, formerly Santa Claus Land.

The Santa Claus Museum & Village is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the history of Santa Claus, Indiana, and continues the tradition of Santa's Elves, Inc. by answering letters to Santa. For additional information on letters to Santa and the 2015 Christmas season, visit www.santaclausmuseum.org.