

Hello again. This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Thursday, November 30, 2023 on KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

While many have barely finished off last week's Thanksgiving leftovers, today marks day 20 of a hunger strike at the Tacoma Northwest Detention Center. In a press release from the immigrant rights group La Resistencia, they noted the hunger strike began on November 11 and at one point over 100 immigrants joined the strike. Only 9 of them remain refusing all meals. The strikers say that Immigration Customs Enforcement – or ICE – has not talked to them about their individual cases for weeks or months in some instances. Their main demand is that ICE live up to its obligations, giving immediate freedom to those who can stay in the country and immediate deportation to those without further recourse.

As reported by the *Washington State Standard*, the detention center is run on behalf of ICE by a private company, the GEO Group. It's one of the largest immigrant detention facilities in the country and has long been controversial, with critics decrying how people held there are treated. University of Washington researchers have identified a number of problems and troubling practices at the site, including worm-infested food, medical neglect, and sexual assaults.

Since the strike began, however, detainees have been released at a higher rate. Starting on Tuesday November 21, large numbers of people were being released from detention. One report stated that 20 people were given bonds of \$5,000.00 in one single day. Further reports showed nearly 50 people were released in one day. One person detained stated that ICE officers showed up saying they were behind on processing the releases. While this is a huge victory for some, none of the remaining strikers have been granted bonds or parole to be released.

La Resistencia is asking for support with this cause in several ways. Those willing and able can stand in solidarity with hunger strikers by rallying every night outside the detention center, for as long as the strike lasts every weekday at 7pm. The detention center is located at 1623 East J Street in Tacoma. La Resistencia also noted that people can reach out to Congressman Derek Kilmer to demand ICE meet with strikers, give them answers, and set affordable bonds for their immediate release. Kilmer can be contacted at <https://kilmer.house.gov/contact>.

On a more cheerful note, I saw Port Townsend's largest Christmas tree getting delivered to the American Legion Hall this week as they prepare to host this year's Magic of Christmas event next week from December 6 to 11 from 6 to 8pm. After hosting the inaugural weeks-long event at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds last year, they're returning with a shortened schedule and a new theme: Kringle's Christmas Express. Visits and letters to Santa in his workshop will be free for all on a first-come first-serve basis as opposed to the sign-up system of last year. Tickets for the event come in the form of a boarding pass (\$3 for one and \$5 for two) which gets visitors a homemade holiday cookie, a cup of hot cocoa, up to three reindeer games to play, and a craft to make and take.

On December 10 only, the Mistletoe Market, a youth and adult Christmas market, will replace the arts and crafts activities. Perhaps the most anticipated event is the "Holiday Hot Line" Lighted Car Parade, scheduled for December 9 from 5:30 to 6:30pm. Last year, more than 40 cars were loaded with lights and many more are expected this year according to festival organizer Ted Krysinski. For more information on the event, go to <https://smilesunderthetree.org/>.

If you can't wait a week to get festive, the Library District's Gingerbread House-Making Contest has just opened. Bakers and crafters of all ages and abilities are invited to design and build their own edible creations, with library patrons passing their judgment to vote for their favorites. Structures may be built out of anything that can be eaten. If you need supplies, today is the last day to register for an optional supply kit which includes graham crackers, candy, and frosting mix. Crafters can submit entries online at <https://jclibrary.info/programs-events/gingerbread2023/>. You may also bring your entry to the library to be displayed. Voting will be online and open to the public from 8am. on Thursday, December 14 to 5pm on Wednesday, December 20 and winners will be announced online on Friday, December 22.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturdays. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. This is Derek Firenze. Thanks for listening.