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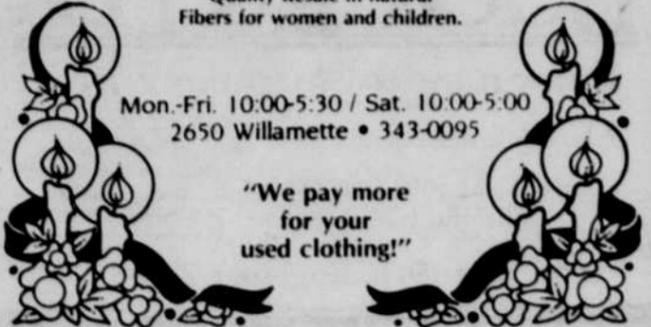



Photo by Shu-Shing Chen
John Guardino, a theater arts student at Lane Community College, listens to the Christmas wishes of Tyler Sutherland (left) and Amanda Sue Sutherland.

Moonlighting as part-time Santa provides holiday joy, extra cash

By **Tonnie Dakin**
Of the Emerald

Santas are a familiar part of Christmas, and when one is seen on a street or in a shopping center, many people do not give them a second thought.

But for students needing extra money, employers who train and distribute Santas and businesses that hire Santas, these jolly holiday fellows are an important part of the season.

Scott Fertick, a University freshman pre-journalism major, was hired by Western Temporary Services as a Santa for the first time this year.

Fertick works about 15 hours a week at Valley River Center and at private parties, he said. He heard about the job through a friend who was a Santa last season and thought it would be a good way to make money for Christmas, he said.

John Black, a 27-year-old chef at Leah's Wine & Co., is working as a Santa for his second year. He works both jobs during the Santa season, devoting about 25 hours each week to Western Temporary Services.

"I'm doing it because I could use the extra money, and just for the fun of it... it brings me a lot of joy," Black said.

Fertick and Black started their orientation before Thanksgiving when they were fitted for suits and shown videotapes on how to be a Santa, he said.

"The costume is all right, but the pillow makes it a little uncomfortable," Fertick said.

Black, who has a 1-year-old child, has had no other professional experience with children. "My son doesn't want to have anything to do with me when I'm Santa," he said.

Fertick, who has worked as a camp counselor, has had no problems with children on his job, he said.

"It's not so much the kids, it's the parents that are the problems," he said. "Sometimes they will try to make their kids sit on my lap,

and they will keep them there until they stop crying. They're much more of a problem than the kids."

"A lot of parents really force the kids on the Santa, and I don't really like that," Black said, adding that he also has never had a problem with a child.

Black plans to continue being a Santa whenever the opportunities arise because "I don't really do it for the money," he said. "I do it more for the joy of it than anything."

"The kids are so honest. They say things that are so natural... you don't find that in adults," Black said.

John Guardino, a fourth year Santa veteran, said the most common things children ask for are He-Man and Barbie dolls. Some children have asked him to bring their fathers home, he said.

Pat Adams, Western Temporary Service office manager, has a variety of Santas working for her now, many with two years or more experience, she said.

In the past, Adams has had Santas from a wide variety of occupations, including chefs, welders and students, she said. Adams does not advertise for the job because "we just don't turn anyone loose," she said.

Adams is knowledgeable about all of her Santas because she knows the employees personally or because they have worked for her before, she said.

"You wouldn't want someone with a background you weren't sure about," she said. "It's probably one of the most difficult jobs I have in terms of recruiting people because not everyone can do it."

There is no specific physical attribute or gender necessary to be a Santa, and although "a round face and blue eyes make a more typical Santa, that doesn't particularly make them any better," Adams said.

To learn their job, the Santas go through a training course a week before the Santa season

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