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Season's Greetings '90

Gift trees make a difference for Eugene, Springfield's children

Chris wants a Ninja Turtle calculator and cash. Latrice wants a "Barbie doll at Shopco." Nikki wants a "big, big, big skateboard," and Arron wants a video game because he "never gotten one of those before."

These four- and five-year-old preschoolers from the Pearl Buck Center are just one group of many to have a gift-giving tree set up for their benefit.

The Pearl Buck Giving Tree is for students and their siblings from low-income families whose parents are developmentally disabled. Pearl Buck's tree is located in the 5th Street Market.

The Voluntary Action Center of the YMCA has two trees in Eugene. The Tree of Joy is in its 11th year at the Valley River Center and a back-up tree is located in Payless Drug Store on 29th Avenue and Willamette Street.

These trees benefit people from Adult and Family Services, Children's Services Division, Lane County Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Disabilities Services Office, and Lane Council of Government's Senior Services Division.

Lane County Relief Nursery has four trees. Its main Tree For Children is in Oakway Mall, and Security Pacific Bank set-up three additional trees in their branch offices for the Relief Nursery.

The Relief Nursery trees benefit their clients who are low-income, developmentally delayed, abused and neglected children. Their siblings also receive gifts.

The Springfield Jaycees have two giving trees for low-income children from Springfield schools and the Brethren Housing complex. The trees are located in Fred Meyer on Q Street in Springfield and in the Springfield Mall off Mohawk Boulevard.

Costco's Have-A-Heart Christmas Tree is set up in their store off Coburg Road to benefit homeless people from the three main shelters in town.

All 10 trees work the same way. Felt ornaments are cut out by volunteers ranging from preschoolers to senior citizens. First names, ages, and requested gifts are written on paper and attached to the ornaments (the Jaycees, however, leave the gift choice up to the donor).

The person wishing to donate a gift chooses an ornament, buys the gift, wraps it and returns it to the tree with the ornament attached, preferably by the second week of December.

The presents are routinely collected,

and recipients are called to pick them up. Sometimes volunteers deliver the gifts to those who are unable to pick them up.

The YMCA has the largest number of recipients. Last year, the agency collected 4,300 gifts and distributed them with volunteer help from Beta Sigma Phi and the Eugene Rotary. Kathy Ask, Director of the Department of Human Resources Volunteer Program, said so far "we're pretty much batting a thousand."

The Pearl Buck Giving Tree program began last year and was quite a success, said preschool teacher Ann Stuart.

Pearl Buck teachers write suggested presents on the ornaments. These are usually necessity items such as coats, shoes and hats, but Stuart said they try to give one toy to each child.

The Lane County Relief Nursery needs 250 gifts for its children ages six weeks and up and the children's siblings.

"It's an absolutely wonderful outpouring of the community," said Carol Berkman, the agency's director of development.

Both Costco and the Jaycees tree programs differ from the other three programs.

Three donated buses will bring 150 homeless people to a huge party at Costco. Layla McClellan, who helped start the program, said Costco will provide food and activities as they hand out the gifts. The activities include making cards, cookies and T-shirt decorations.

The Jaycees not only find gifts for their 220 low-income children, but they take the children on a shopping spree to buy gifts for their siblings and parents.

The only problems the organizations complained of were people bringing back presents past the second week of December and people taking tags and not returning gifts.

The YMCA seems to have the most problems in these areas as a result of their huge number of recipients.

Ask said the problem with late gift returns is it makes distribution difficult and rushed. If the gifts are not received by the organization early enough, the recipients may not receive them by Christmas, Ask said.

Problems aside, the five programs combined give a little joy to at least 5,000 needy, disabled and elderly people.

—Wendy Fisher



Melissa Bork, a senior in fine arts (left), and Nicole Sagen, a senior in journalism, choose tags from a gift tree at Valley River Center. Low-income children and those with disabilities benefit from 10 such trees.

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and there's more where that came from.
Merry Christmas Holly!

Garrett.
We may be far from home, but we still have each other!
I love you.
Carol.

ALPHA PHI'S
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And we'll see you next year.
THE KAPPA SIG'S

Merry Christmas
DIANA. Same time this year! And next year, and the year after that and the year after that, and
SCOTT

MERRY MESSAGES FROM AROUND THE WORLD
will appear Friday, December 7 in the Oregon Daily Emerald Classifieds. Don't miss the deadline! December 6, 1 p.m.!