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 DETAILS IN TOMORROW'S OREGON DAILY EMERALD

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Tree of Joy

TREE OF JOY

That uncanny sparkling aura of joy and generosity has returned to Eugene.

As the holiday season draws closer, several people will begin creating their holiday lists and checking them twice in hopes that St. Nick soon will be near.

Among the hopeful in quest for that jolly, giving character are many children of low-income families along with seniors and disabled adults. Those people who are a bit less fortunate than others could especially use a helping hand this time of year.

This is the 13th year the "Tree of Joy" will provide gifts for people who are among the most needy individuals in Lane County.

Recipients of the joy are clients of 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.

Those people chosen to be recipients are given a decorated ornament to hang on the tree. The ornament has a label on it that reveals two gift requests and the individual's name.

Shoppers select an ornament from the tree, buy and wrap the designated gift, and return it back under the tree with the ornament on top. The gift is then distributed to the person requesting it.

Terry McDonald, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul Society, said the gifts are picked up by volunteers who shuttle the gifts to the central distribution site. There, another corps of volunteers bag gifts by family and notify the recipients that their packages are ready to be picked up.

Distribution of gifts to people who cannot get to the site, and delivery to rural areas is accom-



Photo by Dylan Couler
 Eugene resident Mavis Cole, looking to make an under-privileged person's Christmas wish a reality, searches the Tree of Joy at the Valley River Center.

plished through various service organizations, volunteers and resource centers.

The Tree of Joy is a holiday project that last year garnered more than 5,500 gifts for the needy. This amounted to more than \$137,500 in gifts. This year's tree was unveiled at Valley River Center mall Friday, Nov. 27 and is expected to produce at least 6,000 gifts.

The event featured singing by the Emerald Valley Christmas Chorus, a visit from Santa and a brief talk by Casey Lemon, a volunteer for the Tree of Joy.

Valley River Center donated the tree and its location in front of Skeie's Jewelers, as well as sev-

eral thousand dollars for the project.

Although the event has a strong and supportive core of volunteers, anyone who wants to give to the tree is welcome to take part.

"It's a wonderful event that allows everyone a chance to give to a great cause," Lemon said. "The tree is open to all who want to get involved in the spirit of giving."

Many stores throughout the Eugene area have involved themselves in the spirit and taken an ornament from the tree. In fact there are so many volunteer

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