



ON THE COVER:
The Eugene Ballet Company will be presenting the Nut Cracker during December.

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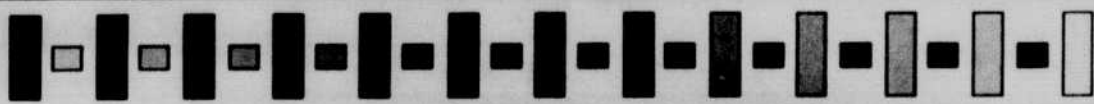
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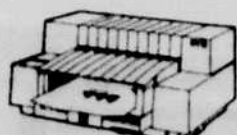
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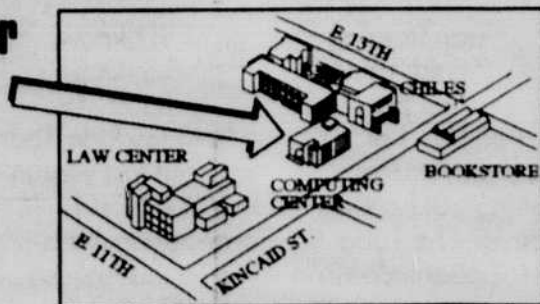


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WILSON CHAN/for the Emerald
Eugene resident Debbie Dean, along with her daughter Marissa (right), pick up a heart from the "Tree of Joy" in the Valley River Center.

Tree of Joy fixture for needy families

Everybody complains about holiday anxiety, but the holidays can be especially stressful for parents who can't afford to buy gifts.

In some cases, this stress is taken out on their children.

Fourteen years ago, St. Vincent de Paul tried to help needy families by asking the community to buy Christmas gifts for them. This project turned into the Tree of Joy, now a fixture during the holiday season in Eugene.

This year St. Vincent de Paul will have trees in two locations — one at Valley River Center and one at Payless at 29th Avenue and Willamette Street. If another tree is needed, Oakway Shopping Center will put up a third.

Ornaments on the trees have labels with the first name of a recipient and the age and gender. The ornament also lists two ideas for gifts costing less than \$25. Those who wish to buy a gift can take an ornament and buy the gift, wrap it, attach the ornament to the gift and place it under the

tree. "It's a beautiful program," said Mary Scott, volunteer coordinator for the Tree of Joy. "When I think how the community reaches out to others in the community ... it's like they are next-door neighbors, and they really are."

Most of the gift recipients, who must fill out an application and demonstrate a need in order to receive a gift, are children, Scott said. Last year, more than 4,000 ornaments out of 5,500 were for children. The others were for disabled adults or senior citizens on a very low income.

For those who feel uncomfortable with buying a gift or who can't make it to one of the trees, St. Vincent de Paul encourages cash donations. Checks can be made out to Tree of Joy/SVDP and sent to: Tree of Joy, P.O. Box 2602, Eugene, OR 97402. Cash donations are used to buy gifts for those whose ornaments aren't taken by someone in the community.

— Stephanie Sisson

Free Thanksgiving dinners will be provided this week

Free Thanksgiving dinners will be provided at the following locations:

- Whiteaker Community School, 21 N. Grand St., Eugene, on Nov. 25, from 2 to 5 p.m. Open to the public.
- Eugene Mission, 1542 W. 1st Ave., on Nov. 25, beginning at noon. Homeless people only.
- St. Alice Catholic Church, 1520 F St., Springfield, on Nov. 24, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Fam-

- ilies only.
- Salvation Army, 1275 Mill St., Springfield, on Nov. 25, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Open to the public.
- Ida Patterson Elementary School, 1510 W. 15th Ave., Eugene, on Nov. 24, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Families only.
- National Guard Armory, 2515 Centennial Blvd., Eugene, on Nov. 25, from noon to 3 p.m. Open to the public.

— Stephanie Sisson