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Giving Tree

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"[The halls] sacrifice money they could use for their own entertainment. That has really helped the program go," he adds. "It almost makes up half of the presents."

Students can continue to donate gifts until Dec. 11. Once wrapped, the gifts will go to Centro Latino Americano, which will give them to the children of low-income families during its annual Christmas Fiesta.

"Most of the families are needy families — they really need help and toys," says Ruth Garcia-Popous, a caseworker for the Los Niños program at Centro Latino Americano. "The kids are really excited. They love it."

Last year, the agency provided Christmas presents for 507 children, many of them donated.

"It's huge — the line usually goes all the way around the corner," she says.

Bill Holmstrom, resident director for Hamilton Complex, says he is pleased that students have responded so well to the program.

"It's really heartening to see students going out, buying gifts, and helping the community," he says. "It shows that students aren't just about themselves, but about helping the community."

"I think a lot of kids are going to be thankful and appreciative,"



Amanda Couvan/Emerald

Junior environmental studies major Lisa Low wraps a baby mobile at the Hamilton Complex gift-wrapping party Thursday evening as part of the Giving Tree program.

agrees freshman biochemistry major Matthew Anderson, who stopped by the Hamilton gift-wrapping party to help wrap a few presents.

Yeh says he was nervous at first about how students would react to having the trees set up in the residence halls. He emphasizes that the trees are giving trees, not Christmas trees.

"I was worried about trees being a religious symbol," he says. "But I felt the purpose of the project outweighed any possible offense. I believe you can make a tree just a tree."

But Misslin believes the trees should be recognized as a holiday symbol.

"People are so afraid to call it a Christmas tree, but it's like calling a Menorah a candlestick. I think it's OK to acknowledge; we don't have to be culturally void," she says.

Whatever students choose to call the trees, the purpose of the program is the same.

"I think people understand what it's for, so we can help people less fortunate," Yeh says. "This is what the tree is for, to help little kids have a good holiday season."



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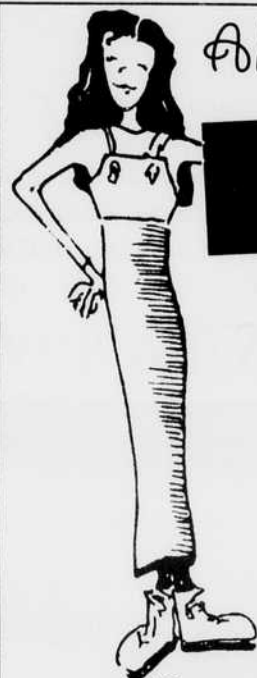


Holiday hours:

December 23, close at 5, no MusEvenings
Dec. 24 and 25, closed
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