# **Keizer Community**

## **Basketball program brightens holidays for local family**

By MATT RAWLINGS Of the Keizertimes

For most high school basketball teams, the day after a big Friday night victory is spent with rest and maybe some film-watching in preparation for the next game.

But the McNary boys basketball program does things a little bit differently.

After defeating David Douglas 65-55 in the Newberg Boys Basketball Tournament on Dec. 21, the McNary boys spent the following day buying and wrapping Christmas presents for a family in

During each holiday season, as a part of the senior leadership project, the Celtics will find a local family in the community with young kids that are in need — the family is usually selected through churches or schools.

The McNary basketball program has been doing this for nearly a decade.

"Regardless of wins and losses and the success you have on the floor, our responsibility as coaches is not only to develop the player, but more importantly the person," Mc-Nary head coach Ryan Kirch said. "(The project) gives us the opportunity to give back to a community that does a lot to support us. It really has become a staple of our program."

The team bought the gifts with money that they fund-



Members of the McNary High School basketball program break for a photo with the gifts they collected for a family in need.

raised through helping out at youth basketball tournaments that are hosted at the high school and getting sponsors through their annual freethrow-a-thon.

Kirch reached out to the family the week prior to make sure everything was situated, but it's up to the players to figure out how to break up the fundraising money and how to handle shopping and gift-wrapping duties.

"It's actually a lot of fun being able to do something that's not for you and give to other people," McNary senior Alfredo Villareal said. "That's honestly the best part of Christmas and this time of year."

"It was a really good team bonding activity because we all had to work together to manage the money we had and buy the stuff that we thought the

McNary senior Noah Hudkins echoed those same senti-

kids would like."

"It's amazing to have this opportunity to provide a Christmas for someone else," Hudkins said.

This year, the lucky recipients were Ashley Beltran's three daughters — Jasmine (age 6), Jade (age 7) and Lily (age 8).

Beltran, whose kids attend Keizer Elementary, filled out a form from the school asking for help for the holidays.

Due to an unforeseen emergency, Beltran felt that she would have a hard time providing presents for her children

this Christmas. But her fears were alleviated when Kirch informed her that his team was going to step up for her and her kids.

"I was so relieved," Beltran said when Kirch notified her that the basketball team would be providing gifts for her daughters. "My girls were so excited to meet the players."

After buying a myriad of gifts on the morning of Dec. 22, the Celtics squad made their deliveries to the Beltran girls later that afternoon.

Jasmine, Jade and Lilly received multiple presents, such as, winter coats, LOL Dolls and Pikmi Pops — which are large lollipops stuffed with other

The three girls were ecstatic about receiving the surprise presents from the players, and they were even more excited when they got to open the numerous packages on Christmas

"(The players) went over the top. It was so cool," Beltran said. "I feel so blessed that they did that for my kids."

### Scouts wants your trees



Grant Schaeffer and Liam Koenig, of Boy Scout Troop 121, load up a tree to be recycled in the parking lot of US Bank at 5110 River Road North. The scouts will be out again this weekend on Jan. 5 and 6, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., accepting tree in the parking lot. Pick-up can also be arranged by calling 503-877-4285. The suggested donation is \$5 for dropped off trees and \$10- for pick-up.

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### **Dancers drum** up \$1,200 for food bank

The France School of Dance's annual winter fundraiser collected more than \$1,200 in donations for the Keizer Community Food Bank. LEFT: Meredith Hedgewald, Haley Peerenboom, Ella Peerenboom and Brooklyn Buchheit.

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