



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Mt. Vernon residents had the option to decorate a tree provided by the city or to decorate their own tree.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Residents in Mt. Vernon used a wide array of items to decorate trees on Main Street.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
People traveling through Mt. Vernon's Main Street can see various Christmas trees decorated in front of businesses.



The Eagle/Rudy Diaz  
Courtney Montague, the organizer of Mt. Vernon's second annual Christmas tree decorating contest, said she hopes the decorations and trees lining Main Street will help build Christmas spirit this year.

## Christmas trees bringing holiday cheer to Mt. Vernon

By Rudy Diaz  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Main Street in Mt. Vernon is lined with Christmas cheer as residents decorated trees for the most wonderful time of the year.

Courtney Montague, the organizer of Mt. Vernon's second annual Christmas tree decorating contest, said they wanted to do something fun

for the community during the season.

She also said she hopes the decorations and the trees will help build Christmas spirit amid the tough year it has been.

"It has been a rough year, and that's one of the reasons why I wanted the trees, so people driving through Mt. Vernon or walking can have something nice to look at,"

said Montague. "It'll hopefully boost people's spirits."

Montague said a couple of years ago she purchased 10 trees for the city for this event to have residents decorate. She said the event is planned next year as well.

"I'm hoping this builds the community spirit and gives people something to look at as they're driving through town," Montague said.

## Monument author contributes to Christmas Chicken Soup for the Soul book

Howe tells the true story of a small tree off the side of the road decorated for Christmas

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

A local author contributed to this year's Christmas edition of the long-running anthology Chicken Soup for the Soul.

Rose Howe, a published author from Monument and widely-followed blogger, told the Eagle she had never heard of the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.

"I thought it was some sort of cookery book," Howe said after a writer friend suggested that she submit her story for publication.

Howe, who runs the Triple H Ranch with her husband of 33 years, Darrell, said she was "astounded" at how big and far-reaching the series is.

"I felt very humbled, that they would consider my little story," Howe said.



Contributed photo/K'Lynn Lane  
Monument author Rose Howe at the Condon holiday bazaar.



Howe's contribution to the book tells the true story of a young girl, Ashley Mund, who roughly a decade ago began decorating a small scraggly tree off the side of the road every year at Christmas with her father, Mitch. The tradition carries on to this day.

Howe, who, at the time, drove an ambulance late at night, said the tree always made her smile — and, she said, soothed her after difficult calls.

"You come around that corner and in your headlights pick out that purple tree," she said. "It really does kind of give you a sense of peace and make you tear up."

She said she thinks the story evokes in people the realization that the world, even before the pandemic, goes at such a fast pace and is ever-changing.

"They've got their fancy phones and they're always on the internet and Facebook and this, that, the other," she said.

With families becoming more and more spread out and disconnected, she said, the meaning of Christmas can get lost.

"I think it appeals to people when they realize that there is still a young lady out there who is committed, and determined, no matter where she is to come back and find a scraggly little tree on the side of the road and decorate it so that when people drive by they see this tree," she said, "and it honestly cannot help but bring a smile to your face."