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Print Page

December 01, 2016 11:04AM

Schools, BOSS offer giving opportunities

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The winter holiday season traditionally provides myriad opportunities for community service and giving at Fort Leavenworth.

Major efforts for supporting the less fortunate in the community can be found in the post's schools and its single soldier program.

Each of the schools within Unified School District 207 has found a way to serve the community and provide students with opportunities to develop leadership in support of magnanimous efforts.

The "Warming Tree" is a National Junior Honor Society service opportunity at Patton Junior High School coordinated by Becky Parsons, school counselor and NJHS sponsor.

"NJHS members collect the donations of cold weather accessories like hats, gloves, coats and blankets. All of our students in grades seven through nine may participate by bringing in their donated items and hanging them on the school's tree," Parsons said. "This initiative will run throughout the winter holidays. Then, our National Junior Honor Society chapter will select a local charity and donate the items we've collected."

MacArthur Elementary School's "Adopt A Family Program" develops community partnerships while serving the school and community. This initiative also provides student council representatives at each grade level with an opportunity to provide leadership and to serve the student body.

"Our school traditionally links up with Catholic Charities in order to provide a service opportunity for classes from each grade to adopt a family," said Colleen Anderson, preschool teacher and the MacArthur Elementary School student council sponsor. "The goal of our student council is to get involved in projects to support the school. Student council helps with administration and facilitates logistics so that things run smoothly."

Megan Slaughter, school counselor and program coordinator at Eisenhower Elementary School, said the process allows both students and staff to participate in separate altruistic initiatives.

"The student body donates warm weather accessories and clothing items to Trinity House by way of its Giving Tree, and the school staff has an opportunity to participate in its own Adopt a Family initiative," Slaughter said.

"Bradley Elementary School is undertaking its annual 'Bradley Families Helping Families' program from Dec. 1 through Dec. 9, with donated items going to two families identified through Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas," said Craig Ericks, 6th Grade Teacher and Student Council Advisor. "The Bradley Student Council is organizing this effort for the school."

Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers, a program within the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, partners with the Main Exchange store to manage its annual Angel Tree effort.

"The Angel Tree allows BOSS to accept donations of gifts for children," said Jeff Honey, FMWR's BOSS liaison officer. "We discreetly identify on-post and off-post Angel Tree candidates. This vital coordination is done through our commanders of units on post. And also by working with (Kaw Valley Center, Health Services Inc. of Kansas), the organization that manages social services for children and families in the state."

Honey said the Angel Tree gift process is relatively simple and seamless for shoppers at the Exchange.

"Patrons visit the decorated tree that is located within the front part of the Exchange store near the entrance and choose one of the angel decorations. The angel decoration has a general description about who the gift is for and what type of gift to purchase," Honey said. "After the gift is purchased, the patron places it underneath the Angel Tree."

The shopper can choose the gift and leave it unwrapped under the tree. BOSS collects the items and wraps them. BOSS President Pfc. Stephanie Jackson, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 40th Military Police Battalion (Detention), and BOSS vice President Spc. Benjamin Watts, Medical Department Activity, coordinate with BOSS members to collect the gifts and process them for delivery.

Soldiers interested in BOSS should call 684-1703.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

The Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers Angel Tree is currently on display near the front of the Post Exchange. Tags on the tree represent the wishes of children in foster care and other situations of need. Chosen tags should be placed with an unwrapped gift in the box next to the tree by Dec. 19. For more information, call (913) 271-1602. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

