



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

Walla Walla District
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News Release

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Corps employees provide holiday cheer

WALLA WALLA, Wash. – Some children in Walla Walla should have a brighter Christmas because of a partnership with a local social service agency and employees of the Walla Walla District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Friends of Children of Walla Walla is a program that matches school-age children in need with adult volunteers who befriend and mentor them. At the Christmas season, the adults in the program can nominate their youth partners to receive gifts from other community members.

Although names are not given, the Friends program provided the Corps employees with information for about 60 children, such as an age, whether a boy or a girl, and likes and dislikes. The Walla Walla District employees selected cards with this information from a holiday tree in the District's building lobby, and later returned with a wrapped gift to place beneath the tree.

"A lot of us don't have children at home anymore," said the Corps' Bob McCoy, who coordinated the gift giving with Friends, "so a lot the people here just enjoy shopping for children. And there's also the fulfillment that you're providing something that's going to go to some needy child."

"It's a chance to help people in need," said Derek Fryer, a fishery biologist at the Corps, who provided a gift for an 11 year-old girl. "We can brighten up their Christmas when we feel fortunate for the things that we have."

Some of the family situations are very compelling. One child who will be given gifts this year has parents who are both being treated for cancer, and one is not expected to survive.

"The situations that people are living in are just really tough circumstances," said Regina Eilertson, the executive director of Friends of Walla Walla. "The presents mean so much more than anybody realizes."

This is the seventh year of the Friends program, and the third that Corps employees have helped local children at Christmas. The employees of two local companies also provide gifts for children in the program. Friends of Children of Walla Walla presently works with 110 children year-round.

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