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WRPS volunteers brighten holidays for foster children

RICHLAND, Wash. – Employees of Washington River Protection Solutions (WRPS) provided multiple gifts for more than 500 foster children and families, and donated more than \$4,000 to be shared among social service agencies that help brighten the holidays for families in need.

Employees have steadily expanded a tradition started nearly 10 years ago of placing “giving trees” around the WRPS-managed facilities across the Hanford site so volunteers can select a child or family from the tags on the trees and provide presents ranging from necessities like food, clothing and toiletries to toys and “wish list” items

“This is one of the most heartwarming projects I’ve had the pleasure of participating in,” said Val Vernon, who works for Production Operations.

Trevor Hay, an engineer with Retrieval Operations, said supporting the giving trees program is more than simply doing the right thing. “As employees of a major company and leaders in the Tri-Cities, I feel like it’s our responsibility to help when we can,” he explained.

There were giving trees in more than 20 buildings of participating WRPS organizations. Volunteers wrap the gifts before delivering them.

The cash donations were shared with:

- The Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families, which coordinates child protective services, foster parenting and adoptions
- The Support, Advocacy & Resource Center, which provides advocacy, counseling and support to survivors of crime.
- Lutheran Community Services Northwest, which focuses on helping vulnerable children, families and immigrants.

Dan Niebuhr, a contractor with Shift Operations who coordinated this year’s giving trees program, said he’s proud of WRPS employees who are inspired by the spirit of Christmas and share their good fortune with people in need.

“We need to take care of each other in whatever way we can,” added volunteer Ashlee Watkins of the Communications Department.

WRPS is the DOE's Office of River Protection tank farms contractor, responsible for safely managing the underground tanks storing radioactive and hazardous waste and for preparing for retrieval and treatment of that waste.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

WRPS Giving Trees Program Coordinator Dan Niebuhr collects gifts provided by employee volunteers.

Volunteer Ashlee Watkins stands near one of about 20 giving trees among the WRPS-managed facilities across Hanford.

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