Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Trees for Troops delivers holiday joy to Fort Drum Soldiers, families

FORT DRUM, N.Y. – Soldiers and family members gathered early outside The Peak on Dec. 6 to be among the first to select a free Christmas tree through the Trees for Troops program.

Pfc. Jeremy Smith, with 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), joined the initial rush for the perfect tree with his family.

“When I heard it was first-come, first-served, that made me nervous, so I thought we should get here early to make sure we got the tree we wanted,” Smith said. “I’ve always had live Christmas trees, so the fact that they were being given for free caught my attention.”

More than 800 farm-grown trees were donated to Fort Drum through the Christmas Spirit Foundation’s annual program, with thousands more sent to more than 90 military installations worldwide.

“First of all, I just like the smell of a live tree,” Smith said. “But it just makes it feel more like Christmas.”

Smith said he is looking forward to decorating the tree with Juliana and Eliana, age 2, and starting new traditions as a family.

“Just coming here for the tree, we were listening to Christmas music and getting all excited,” he said. “Honestly, I’m just looking forward to spending time with family, seeing my daughter’s reaction when she opens her presents, and the same thing with my wife, too.”

“And making memories,” said Juliana Iniestra. “Just this moment is a memory for us.”

Alana Honor said she arrived early in anticipation of a busy day ahead.

“It was either get the tree this morning, or not having this treat for my kids,” she said.

Honor said her son has loved decorated trees in his first-grade class, so this will be a thrill for him to do at home.

“When he comes home, he’s like, ‘Mommy, I want to pick the colors, I want to pick the bulbs and the lights,’” she said. “We’re going to let the kids do it all and have fun with it.”

New to the area, Honor said they are looking forward to spending quality time together this holiday season.

“Everybody’s home, and we’re going to do it the best way we can,” she said.

Members of the Fort Drum Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program joined representatives from the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation to unload the trees from the truck and set up a festive environment for the community with music, treats, and hot beverages.

“Thanks to the generosity of so many people involved in this annual charitable program, from our local sponsors to the national Christmas Spirit Foundation, FMWR is proud to keep the Trees for Troops tradition going here at Fort Drum,” said Kirk Davis, Fort Drum FMWR Marketing chief. “And we are extremely grateful to the representatives from Fort Drum BOSS on hand to assist Soldiers and families with carrying the trees to their vehicles.”

A festive mood on post has already been set after the traditional Tree Lighting and Holiday Celebration the night before at The Peak, with more events to follow this month.

“It is during this time of year that FMWR gives back to our Soldiers and their families through various events, from the Fort Drum Tree Lighting Ceremony and free holiday meal to the Trees for Troops program that are happening back-to-back this week,” Davis said. “Together they are a perfect way to get the community in the spirit of the holidays.”

Community members are invited to run the Ugly Sweater 5K at 11 a.m. Dec. 14 outside Magrath Sports Complex. A Cozy Christmas Trivia Night is scheduled 5 p.m. Dec. 20 at the Ridge Sports Bar inside The Peak.

Mountain Community Homes residents can participate in the Deck the House holiday décor contest now until Dec. 13. Residents are invited to a Night of Lights self-guided display tour throughout the housing communities from 5 to 7 p.m. Dec. 12. For more information, call (315) 955-6800.

For the second year, Jacob Ball, fishery biologist with the Fort Drum Environmental Division’s Natural Resources Branch, tagged trees with a special request. Community members can help to improve the local fish populations by donating their used trees, which will be used to build fish habitats. The Natural Resources Branch will accept tree donations until the end of January at Bldg. 4000 on Utility Road.

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Media with questions regarding this press release should contact Fort Drum Public Affairs, Katie Wright, 315-772-9043 or katherine.e.wright12.civ@army.mil

Photo Captions:

Trees 1 & 3 - Soldiers and family members gathered early outside The Peak on Dec. 6 to be among the first to select a free Christmas tree through the Trees for Troops program. More than 800 farm-grown trees were donated to Fort Drum through the Christmas Spirit Foundation’s annual program, with thousands more sent to over 90 military installations worldwide. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Trees 2 - Members of the Fort Drum Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program and volunteers help unload trees for the annual Trees for Troops program on post. Soldiers and family members gathered early outside The Peak on Dec. 6 to be among the first to select a free Christmas tree, with more than 800 donated through the Christmas Spirit Foundation’s annual program. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)