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Fundraising campaign adds a jingle to Creswell's Tree Lighting Ceremony

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This year's annual Tree Lighting Ceremony is going to be a bit different than in years past.

Yes, Santa will be there, along with music, entertainment, hot cocoa and all of the warm and fuzzy feelings that come along with the iconic holiday celebration that takes place around the beginning of December each year in the Library's parking lot downtown.

If that isn't enough to inspire you to get out on a cold December night, consider the competitive edginess that Creswell's first ever Christmas tree decorating contest will bring to the event.

The contest, called Christmas Trees for Cobalt, will be held during the Tree Lighting Ceremony this year to raise funds and awareness for the Cobalt Building Redevelopment Project, an effort to transform the industrial building located at 364 Cobalt Lane into Creswell's first community and recreation center.

About 15 community groups, clubs and businesses have pitted themselves in competition against each other in hopes that they can make a difference in our community while having fun at the same time.

Three awards will be given out at the conclusion of the Tree Lighting Ceremony: The People's Choice award will be given to the tree that receives the highest dollar amount of cash donations during the event; Santa's Choice will be chosen by Santa Claus himself; and Elves' Choice will be painstakingly determined by the Creswell Youth Advisory Council (CYAC), who will be dressing up as elves for the contest.

Because the trees themselves will be awarded to the highest bidder, you could end up having a fully decorated Christmas tree delivered directly to your home or business by the decorators themselves.

When asked why she decided to participate, Mikiala Odell, a Creslane student who is helping with the Creswell Clubhouse's Hawaiian-themed tree, said, "It's fun, because we get to decorate our own tree!" Creswell Clubhouse Executive Director Laura Rariden echoed those sentiments by adding, "It's great to be able to support a worthy cause and have a blast at the same time!"

Leadership and planning for the contest has come from the Creswell Youth Advisory Council, a group of middle and high school students that serve as an official advisory council to the Creswell City Council.

CYAC decided early during the planning process that each tree entered in the contest must have a theme, and each group will have to provide their own tree stand, lights and decorations, and be responsible for delivering their tree to the highest bidder in the silent auction.



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Groups who decorate trees will have to be creative because of a \$100 spending limit on decorations. CreswellSK895, a local group of skateboard and BMX enthusiasts, will present a Skateboarder's Delight Tree.

The trees themselves are being generously donated by Gerold Eldredge and Northern Lights Christmas Tree Farm.

"This will be the kick-off event for the Cobalt Building Capital Campaign, and we are excited to say that it is shaping up to be a successful and entertaining fundraiser that will give back to the Creswell community in more ways than one," said Creswell Community Development Coordinator Wes Johnson.

Johnson is helping implement the fundraising campaign with Titus Tomlinson and Rich Foster of Cascadia Consulting Partnership.

Tomlinson and Foster estimate that the project will cost \$2.7 million in total when completed. About \$1.8 million has already been secured for the project, including the cost of the donated building and land.

Foster said, "The 'Christmas Trees for Cobalt' program is tremendously important to the success of the Capital Campaign for the redevelopment and rededication of the Cobalt Building.

"The community vision of the Cobalt Building being transformed into a community recreation center is a powerful image. To reach this goal the community will have to work together, raise some money, and most importantly have some fun doing it.

"Clearly through the leadership of Creswell Youth Advisory Council, the Christmas Trees for Cobalt event is already accomplishing these three critical elements," he concluded.

Although the bulk of remaining funding will come from large grants, the fundraising campaign cannot be successful without the support of the Creswell community, which makes events like Christmas Trees for Cobalt vital to the campaign's success.

Remember, Christmas Trees for Cobalt will take place between 4:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 2, 2010 near the library's parking lot downtown.

For more information about the Cobalt Building and the capital campaign, please view the videos posted on the City of Creswell webpage (www.ci.creswell.or.us) and on the City of Creswell YouTube Channel. If you have any questions about Christmas Trees for Cobalt or the Cobalt Building Capital Campaign, please contact Wes Johnson at 895-2531 or wjohnson@creswell-or.us.

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