A Beacon of Community Spirit

The Giving Tree Festival raffles trees to help support area residents with health struggles

By Andrea Lucatero

Selfless, joyful, passionate. These words barely scratch the surface of what Susan Marlow represents. For years, she has been a cherished member of the Klickitat County community, but her positivity and compassion are what truly set her apart.

In 2022, a momentous event unfolded in our community: the Giving Tree Festival. This event was born out of Susan's personal journey through breast cancer and her newfound resolve to assist others in their health struggles.

The Genesis of the Giving Tree Festival

The Giving Tree Festival was conceived in the fall of 2022 when Jeanne Bradley and Susan Marlow became aware of two community members in need of support. Cameron Mains needed a kidney transplant, and Alison Azevedo stepped forward to donate one of hers. The news inspired Jeanne and Susan, whose love for Christmas and the spirit of giving propelled them into action.

They envisioned an event that could channel the community's generosity into a tangible support system for those in need. Their concept was simple yet impactful: organize a festival where locals could donate themed Christmas trees to be raffled off, with the proceeds going to support Cameron, Alison and others in similar predicaments.

Jeanne Bradley, left, and Susan Marlow run the Giving Tree Festival fundraiser.

A Resounding Success

The inaugural Giving Tree Festival was met with overwhelming enthusiasm. The community contributed 11 trees. Funds raised provided significant financial relief to those in need, while the event fostered a sense of solidarity and support within the community.

The success of the first festival was a testament to the community's generosity and the effectiveness of Susan and Jeanne's vision.

An Annual Tradition

The Giving Tree Festival has since become an annual event. Susan's dedication and the impact of her personal journey have set a precedent for kindness and community support, inspiring many to contribute and participate in this meaningful cause. Her selfless contributions and the joy she brings to those around her are a testament to the power of empathy and collective action.

The third annual Giving Tree Festival is Friday, Nov. 8 from 4-8 p.m. and Saturday, Nov. 9 from 3-8 p.m. at the Goldendale Grange. This year, proceeds will go to Goldendale resident Charity Lynn Havens, who was recently diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis.

Tickets to win a tree are $5 each and can be bought at the Grange the weekend of the festival. Winning tickets will be drawn from the package under each tree. Only one winner per family. ∎

For more information, call Susan Marlow at 509-773-3309 or Jeanne Bradley at 509-261-2513.