

Tree lighting brightens spirits

Willamette's star shines again

The five decorated trees could be the nation's tallest on a college campus.

BY SHAWN DAY
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Moments before the switch was flipped, Salem Mayor Janet Taylor declared five giant sequoias arranged as the points of a star at Willamette University as the tallest trees decorated with lights on a U.S. college campus.

Taylor made the announcement shortly before 7 p.m. Friday, when the 141-foot-tall trees were lighted with multicolored lights hung in vertical rows.

Local tree expert Maynard C. Dawson said he thought the claim was true, adding that the trees were almost 20 feet taller than Western Oregon University's giant sequoia.

More than 400 people attended the seventh annual Star Trees lighting on the north lawn of Willamette University's Waller Hall, across the street from the state Capitol.

Keizer residents Chris and Shirleen Reynolds made their first trip to the ceremony with their three children.

"We had to bring the kids to at least one" tree lighting, Shirleen said while standing beside the stroller holding her 3-week-old baby, Cheyanne.

Her other two daughters, Destiny and Sierra,



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HONOR: Genevieve Carney, 6, and her father, Matt Carney of Salem, cheered Friday for Genevieve's brother Christopher, 8, who got to turn on the lights of the Star Trees at Willamette University's tree lighting ceremony.

ages 7 and 4, played hide-and-seek before the lighting with dozens of other children around the base of the five trees.

Police closed a stretch of State Street to accommodate the crowd, and members of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity handed out free hot chocolate and kicked

off their annual fund-raising and winter coat campaign for Union Gospel Mission.

Senior Trevor Newton said about 50 coats and \$100 had been collected.

Jay Remy and Marcia Latta said that they were starting a tradition Friday night by bringing their

8-month-old daughter, Audrey, to the tree lighting at Willamette University.

"It's a fun way to kick off the season," said Latta, a 1991 Willamette graduate.

Across the street, Ken and Sandy Allen stood on the sidewalk by the Capitol, watching the crowd and waiting for the tree to

light up.

"I love this stuff," Ken Allen said, smiling.

"It puts me in the Christmas spirit ... It's what we all need."

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