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Seminary students help Angel Tree grow

For The Reporter

MOUNT CALVARY — Seniors from St. Lawrence Seminary in Mount Calvary will deliver gifts to more than 70 children this holiday season. The children come from more than 38 families of prisoners in the Fond du Lac and Milwaukee areas.

This is the 12th year that St. Lawrence students have sponsored an Angel Tree. A total of just more than \$3,000 was raised to fund the project.

Seminarians contact the custodial parents or guardians by telephone to find out what the children want and deliver the presents. Freshmen send Christmas cards to the prisoners and their families, sophomores wrap the gifts and juniors shop for the presents, according to a seminary press release.

Since some of the families speak only Spanish or Hmong, students also serve as interpreters. Each child receives a toy and clothing, and the families receive fruit baskets and homemade jelly.

Students fund the project from the canteen profits and Sunday collections at the student Mass. With staff helping the students at all levels, the program is the biggest total community project at St. Lawrence each year.

Angel Tree was established by Mary Kay Beard in 1982 after she was released early from her prison sentence for multiple charges of armed robbery and grand larceny. While in prison, Beard experienced a religious conversion, graduated with honors from a junior college and was awarded a scholarship to Auburn University, where she earned a master's degree in education.

In the first year of the project, nearly 600 children received four gifts each. The project has turned into a nationwide, church-based program. In 2000, nearly 600,000 children were reached at Christmas, bringing the cumulative total of children helped by that time to more than 5 million.

More details about the program can be found on the Web at www.angeltree.org or from Tim Guiden of St. Lawrence at (920) 753-7522.
