MELINDA OLSON/Thomas County Community Foundation

Students help out St. Nick

Thomas County Academy students (above) helped with wrapping at the third annual Santa's Workshop, organized by the Thomas County Community Foundation. Rylea Nelson (right) carried Christmas gifts for her family after she finished shopping at the workshop, held at the Pioneer Memorial Library on Saturday.

Live trees may actually be more eco-friendly than artificial

LAWRENCE — No matter their color, artificial Christmas trees simply aren't "green."

"The idea that they're eco-friendly is sort of an urban myth," said Jennifer Smith, horticulturist with Kansas State University Research and Extension. "If you consider what they cost in terms of the environment, they really aren't cheaper than buying a real tree every year, either."

Cash costs can vary widely for the two Christmas tree types, she admitted. Nowadays, however, they don't necessarily favor the artificial trees.

For one thing, fake trees don't really last forever, Smith said. Industry estimates suggest the trees tend to last five to 10 years before they start looking too ratty to reuse.

"Beyond that, Good Housekeeping's tests on quality artificial trees identified a top three that cost from $300 to $859," she said. "Good trees aren't cheap."

Owning one of those trees would average out to an annual cost of $60 to $172 in five years and $30 to $86 over 10, she noted.

In contrast, one Kansas Christmas tree farm that combines Internet with on-farm sales promises to deliver a 4- to 6.5-feet "hand-selected, premium" tree to a Web shopper's door for $33 to $55.

"Of course, if you actually went to a local tree farm, you might do just as well, if not better on price," the horticulturist said. "Plus, you'd have the freshest tree available — which also is a value."

To back up her claim about which trees are eco-friendly, Smith also offered these comparisons:

• Local Resources — Today's real trees rarely come from forests. They're grown on tree farms in every U.S. state and Canada. Many of the farms allow you to choose your own, plus they provide such bonuses as hayrides and hot apple cider. Those farms often replant three trees for every one cut.

China is the giant in making artificial trees for the U.S. market. The U.S. Department of Commerce puts artificial trees in the nation's top 30 imports from China, accounting for between 80 and 90 percent of U.S. artificial tree stocks.

• Environmental Effects — As they grow to harvest size, real evergreens absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen for years. They stabilize soil, filter rainwater runoff and shelter wildlife. They even smell good.

The basic material in artificial trees is a petroleum-based plastic — generally the one known as PVC (polyvinyl chloride). Manufacturing this plastic releases cancer-causing dioxin into the environment. Just as worrisome, apparently some nations still allow the use of lead as a stabilizer in making PVC.

California now requires that artificial trees from China carry a warning label.

In a 2008 report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a multi-agency review panel on U.S. children's exposure to lead noted, "Artificial Christmas trees made of PVC also degrade under normal conditions. About 50 million U.S. households have artificial Christmas trees, of which about 20 million are at least nine years old, the point at which dangerous lead exposures can occur."

"Recent studies have found that as plastic trees age, they can start to release a kind of lead dust into your home," Smith said. "That alone could have a real impact on how long we want to keep an artificial tree before replacing it — perhaps with a live tree."

Without water, live trees become a fire hazard

MANHATTAN — Freshness and water are key to ensuring a real Christmas tree doesn't become fire fodder before Boxing Day, said Charles Barden, forester with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

"If you're buying from a lot, rather than a Christmas-tree farm, look for trees with flexible branch tips and dark green needles," Barden said. "Shake any tree you're interested in buying. If it sheds a few yellow needles, that's OK, but otherwise, no needles should drop."

The forester added that a fresh tree will still be holding so much water inside that it seems heavy for its size.

"To keep your selected tree well-watered when you get home, cut an inch or two from its stump — even if you just cut it at a tree farm," Barden said. "This reopens any pitch-clogged pores, so the tree can drink again. Then place the tree in water immediately."

He said to store newly bought trees in a cool place, such as a garage or basement, before setting them up to decorate.

"A cut tree can easily absorb a gallon of water while rehydrating during the first 24 hours you have it," Barden said.

After that, to extend the tree's natural fire-fighting ability as long as possible:

• Locate it away from such heat sources as radiators, heat ducts or heaters.

• Use a stand large enough to hold an inch of water for every inch in the tree trunk's diameter.

"Placing a penny or aspirin in the water won't accomplish much," the forester said.

• Check the water level frequently, to ensure the tree doesn't run dry. "Generally, you'll be supplying 1 to 2 quarts of water every day," Barden said.

• If the stand runs dry but the tree remains flexible, cut off another inch from the stump and start over again. If the tree seems dry, too, get it out and away from the house and recycle.

LOCAL TV LISTINGS

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SATURDAY DECEMBER 13

	6 AM	6:30	7 AM	7:30	8 AM	8:30	9 AM	9:30	10 AM	10:30	11 AM	11:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	Good Morning Kansas Saturday		Good Morning America (N) (CC)		Good Morning Kansas Saturday		That's-Raven	That's-Raven	Hannah Montana	Zack & Cody	Emperor	Replace-ments
KSNK/NBC 8 8	Today (N) (CC)				Paid Program	Paid Program	Jane-Dragon	Zula Patrol	Pen-guins	Veggie-Tales	Turbo Dogs	Friend Rabbit
KBSL/CBS 12 11	The Early Show (N) (CC)				News (N)				Straw-berry	Care Bears	Paid Program	Paid Program
K15CG 2	Thomas-Friends	Bob the Builder	Market-Market	Lassie's Pet Vet	Bob the Builder	Thomas-Friends	Beren. Bears	Biz Kid$ (CC)	Equi-trekking	Motor-Week (N)	Wood-wright	Victory Garden
ESPN 28	SportsCenter (CC)		SportsCenter (CC)		SportsCenter (CC)		SportsCenter (Live) (CC)				College Basketball	
USA 37	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Psych Gus' dad is a suspect. (CC)		Psych Christmas Joy (CC)		Monk Mr. Monk and the Secret Santa		Monk Mr. Monk Meets His Dad (CC)	
TBS 38	Movie: A Lot Like Love ★★½ (2005, Romance-Comedy) *Ashton Kutcher.* (CC)				Movie: Guess Who ★★½ (2005) A black man meets his daughter's white boyfriend.				Movie: Something's Gotta Give ★★★ (2003, Romance-Comedy) *Jack Nicholson.*			
WGN 39	Paid Program	Adelante Chicago	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	The Bob & Tom Show (CC)	
TNT 40	Angel Players (CC)		Charmed Bare Witch Project (CC)		Charmed Cheaper by the Coven (CC)		Law & Order Entrapment		Law & Order Juvenile (CC) (DVS)		Leverage Stolen airplane designs.	
DSC 42	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Survivorman		Dirty Jobs Dirtiest machines.		Extreme Loggers Helicopter Logging		Storm Chasers Tornado Showdown	
A&E 47	Biography Tom Cruise (CC)		Sell This House!	Sell This House!	Sell This House!	Sell This House!	Busi-ness	Rocco-Real	Flip This House Giant old house.		Flip This House (CC)	
HIST 48	Heavy Metal The F-15 (CC)		American Eats Snack foods. (CC)		Wild West Tech The Unexplained		UFO Files UFOs of the '70s (CC)		Cities of the Underworld (CC)		The Exodus Decoded (CC)	
NICK 55	Jimmy Neutron	Tak and Power	OddPar-ents	OddPar-ents	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob	Barn-yard	Mighty B	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob
DISN 56	The Wiggles	Higgly-town	Ein-steins	Handy Manny	Mickey Mouse	Mickey Mouse	Imag. Movers	Handy Manny	Higgly-town	Charlie & Lola	Movie: You Wish! (2003) *A.J. Trauth.*	
FAM 58	Frosty's Wnter	Gold	Life of Santa Claus		Drum-mer Boy	Drum-mer Boy	Pinocchio's Christmas (CC)		C'mas Snow	Nestor-Donkey	Garfield Cmas	Cran-berry
HALL 60	Little House on the Prairie (CC)		Little House on the Prairie (CC)		Movie: One Christmas ★★½ (1994, Drama) *Katharine Hepburn, Henry Winkler.*				Movie: All I Want for Christmas (2007, Romance) *Gail O'Grady.* (CC)			

SATURDAY DECEMBER 13

	12 PM	12:30	1 PM	1:30	2 PM	2:30	3 PM	3:30	4 PM	4:30	5 PM	5:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	Paid Program	Paid Program	Paid Program	Colon Detox	Golf: Wendy's Three-Tour Challenge -- Front Nine. Nevada. (CC)				AT&T All-America Team (N)		Paid Program	ABC News
KSNK/NBC 8 8	Jeop-ardy!	Paid Program	Paid Program	Triathlon: Ironman World Championship. (CC)			PGA Tour Golf: Merrill Lynch Shootout -- Second Round. From Naples, Fla. (Live)				Paid Program	NBC News
KBSL/CBS 12 11	Action Sports Championships		College Basketball: Memphis at Georgetown. (Live) (CC)				College Basketball: Indiana at Kentucky. (Live) (CC)				Paid Program	CBS News
K15CG 2	Yankee Shop	This Old House	America's Home Cooking: One Skillet Family recipes for one-skillet meals include steak pizzaiola. (CC)						Sewing With Nancy: Nancy's 25 Favorite			Real Age Make
ESPN 28	College Basketball		College Basketball: Kansas vs. Massachusetts. From Kansas City, Mo.				College Football: NCAA Division I Semifinal -- Teams TBA. (Live) (CC)					
USA 37	Monk Monk shoots a man. (CC)		Monk Mr Monk and the Miracle (CC)		Movie: Liar Liar ★★½ (1997) A fast-talking lawyer cannot tell a lie. *Jim Carrey.* (CC)				Movie: Elf ★★★ (2003) A man leaves Santa's workshop to search for his family.			
TBS 38	(10:15) Movie: Something's		Movie: Secondhand Lions (2003) A teen hears fantastic tales from his great-uncles.				Friends (CC)	Sex and the City	Sex and the City	Ray-mond	Frank TV	Ray-mond
WGN 39	The Bob & Tom Show (CC)		Movie: Benji the Hunted ★★½ (1987, Adventure) *Benji, Red Steagall.* (CC)				Legend of the Seeker Identity (CC)		Legend of the Seeker Prophecy		Becker (CC)	Becker (CC)
TNT 40	Leverage Wounded reservist. (CC)		Movie: The Goonies (1985) Young misfits find a 17th-century pirate's treasure map.				Movie: The Librarian: Return to King Solomon's Mines (2006) *Noah Wyle.* (CC)				Movie: Librarian: Curse of Judas	
DSC 42	Movie: An Inconvenient Truth ★★★½ (2006, Documentary)				Man vs. Wild Scotland (CC)		Man vs. Wild Patagonia (CC)		MythBusters Speed Cameras (CC)		Dirty Jobs (CC)	
A&E 47	Flip This House (CC)		Flip This House Design Wars (CC)		Flip This House (CC)		Flip This House House of horrors.		Flip This House Flip 101 (CC)		The Secret Life of a Serial Killer (CC)	
HIST 48	(11:00) The Exodus Decoded (CC)		UFO Hunters First Contact (CC)		UFO Hunters The Real Roswell (CC)		UFO Hunters Arizona Lights (CC)		Decoding the Past Biblical Disasters (CC)			
NICK 55	The Fairly OddParents (CC)			Mighty B	Mighty B	Barn-yard	Barn-yard	Barn-yard	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob	Spon-geBob
DISN 56	(11:00) Movie:	Phineas and Ferb	Zack & Cody	Zack & Cody	That's-Raven	That's-Raven	Cory in House	Cory in House	Hannah Montana	Hannah Montana	Zack & Cody	Zack & Cody
FAM 58	Jack Frost (CC)		Movie: Rudolph and Frosty's Christmas in July ★★½ (1980, Fantasy) (CC)				'Twas Night	Frosty's Wnter	Rudolph's Shiny New Year (CC)		Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town	
HALL 60	Movie: One Magic Christmas ★★★ (1985, Fantasy) *Mary Steenburgen.* (CC)				Movie: Felicity: An American Girl Adventure ★★½ (2005) *Shailene Woodley.*				Movie: Samantha: An American Girl Holiday ★★ (2004) *AnnaSophia Robb.*			

SATURDAY DECEMBER 13

	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
KLBY/ABC 4 6	News (N) (CC)	Kake News	America's Funniest Home Videos (CC)		Movie: Surviving Christmas ★½ (2004, Comedy) *Ben Affleck, James Gandolfini.*				News (CC)	Desperate Housewives (CC)		Ent. Tonight
KSNK/NBC 8 8	News (N)	Wheel of Fortune	Movie: It's a Wonderful Life ★★★★ (1946) An angel saves a distraught businessman from suicide. *James Stewart.* (CC)						News (N)	Saturday Night Live (CC)		
KBSL/CBS 12 11	News (CC)	Paid Program	Eleventh Hour Cardiac (CC)		48 Hours Mystery (CC)		48 Hours Mystery (CC)		News (N) (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)	Boston Legal From Whence We Came	
K15CG 2	Real Age Makeover With Dr. Michael		The Osmonds 50th Anniversary Reunion (CC)				Steve Miller Band: Live in Chicago (CC)			Last-Bucking	Soundstage Stevie Nicks (Part 2 of 2)	
ESPN 28	SportsCenter (Live) (CC)		Heisman Trophy Present.		The Greatest Game Ever Played (N)				SportsCenter (Live) (CC)		Heisman Trophy Present.	
USA 37	House Safe (CC)		House All In (CC)		House Sleeping Dogs Lie (CC)		House House vs. God (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent		Law & Order: SVU	
TBS 38	King of Queens	King of Queens	Movie: Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby ★★½ (2006) *Will Ferrell.*				Movie: Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy ★★½ (2004) *Will Ferrell.* (CC)				Movie: Guess Who ★★½ (2005) (CC)	
WGN 39	Boston Legal Nuts (CC)		Bulls Eye (CC)	NBA Basketball: New Jersey Nets at Chicago Bulls. United Center. (Live) (CC)					WGN News	Scrubs (CC)	Honey-mooners	Movie:
TNT 40	(5:00) Movie: Librarian: Curs		Movie: Mission: Impossible III ★★★ (2006) Agent Ethan Hunt faces the toughest villain of his career.					Movie: The Librarian: Curse of the Judas Chalice (2008) *Noah Wyle.* (CC)				Movie:
DSC 42	De-stroyed	De-stroyed	Investigation X UFO Outbreak (CC)		UFOs Over Earth (CC)		UFOs Over Earth (CC)		How It's Made	How It's Made	Investigation X UFO Outbreak (CC)	
A&E 47	CSI: Miami Identity (CC)		CSI: Miami Whacked (CC)		CSI: Miami 10-7 (CC)		The Sopranos The Telltale Moozadell		The Sopranos (CC)		CSI: Miami Whacked (CC)	
HIST 48	Modern Marvels Car Wash (CC)		'70s Fever Rare film footage and a period soundtrack help deconstruct the 1970s.				Hippies The counterculture. (CC)				'70s Fever (CC)	
NICK 55	iCarly (CC)	iCarly (CC)	iCarly (N) (CC)	True Jackson	Naked Brothers	OddPar-ents	George Lopez	George Lopez	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Family Matters	Family Matters
DISN 56	Zack & Cody	Hannah Montana	Cory in House	Zack & Cody	Movie: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory ★★★ (2005) *Johnny Depp.*				Zack & Cody	Hannah Montana	That's-Raven	Cory in House
FAM 58	The Year Without a Santa Claus (CC)		A Miser Brothers' Christmas (N) (CC)		Movie: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe ★★★ (2005) Children and a mystical lion unite against the White Witch. (CC)							Fresh Prince
HALL 60	Movie: All I Want for Christmas (2007, Romance) *Gail O'Grady.* (CC)				Movie: The Most Wonderful Time of the Year (2008, Drama) *Henry Winkler.* (CC)				Movie: A Boyfriend for Christmas (2004, Romance-Comedy) *Kelli Williams.* (CC)			

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