

Pearl Buck Christmas Tree Cutting Project Report 2016

Project Date: Wednesday Dec 7, 2015

Project Timing: 10am – 1pm

Emily Gray – Chair

Scott Fagan – Co-chair

Project Goals and Objectives

This project seeks to provide preschoolers from the Pearl Buck Center, Families with Special Needs Classroom, a fun and memory-filled morning at Northern Lights Christmas Tree Farm. In addition to spending the morning with a 20-30 or partner volunteer while picking out a Christmas tree to take home, kids are provided lunch, a hay ride, and crafts time to make the day truly memorable and special.

Project Summary

The project this year was a huge success, despite inclement weather conditions. The day prior to the event, Emily emailed with Pearl Buck Center, who deemed the weather conditions too cold for preschoolers to be outside for multiple hours. Although carried out at Pearl Buck Center, the project ran similarly to prior years; volunteers began arriving at 10am (Northern Lights) and 10:30am (Pearl Buck Center), as the volunteer group split into two. PBC preschoolers were already at PBC, upon volunteer arrival. Santa arrived at 10:45am. The food arrived at about 11:15am. Volunteers joined the preschoolers in arts & crafts, recess and “Santa time”. To better manage the kids, preschoolers were split into two groups, rotating activities after about 30 minutes.

Volunteers at Northern Lights waited approximately 45-60 minutes for pre-cut trees to thaw, before baling (several volunteers left as the baling began, to join PBC volunteers). At this point, half of the volunteers headed to PBC, as few were needed to load and haul. Brian Jones and Robert Steck both brought trucks to haul trees to PBC. Fewer volunteers were needed than anticipated, because the Schuttles pre-cut all donated trees. Three to four “sturdy” volunteers were needed to unload the trees.

The pre-determined weather contingency plan was executed as planned. We highly recommend having a backup plan for poor weather – especially a plan that allows the project to be carried out on the same day (PBC was highly receptive of hosting, if needed). Emily communicated the official contingency plan approximately a week in advance of the project date; the day prior to the project (once PBC had indicated a need to implement the weather contingency plan); Scott and Emily worked to contact involved parties. Emily contacted agency/sponsor partners and Scott contacted volunteers.

A total of 22 volunteers were at the project this year, and approximately 20 Pearl Buck preschoolers were present (headcount confirmed prior to scheduling catering – don’t forget to ask about food allergies!). All volunteers were 20-30 members. In the event of lower volunteer numbers, UO O-Heroes volunteers are an option (Alex Harris or Larissa Straily can help coordinate).

In total, 27 trees were provided to PBC preschoolers. Almost always, more trees are needed than preschoolers present. Be sure to ask PBC if additional tree donations are needed for children not participating.

Home Depot supplied lights and ornaments again this year and also coordinated Santa Claus. Past Active Terri Baker donated gloves to the club (she has done this for years and REALLY enjoys it; make sure to contact her before Black Friday). Arnold Law (Rogelio Cassol, Past Active, was the contact) donated funds to cover the cost of the trees and Northern Lights discounted the trees to \$5/each. Cosmos Creations also donated snack-size bags of Cosmos for the kid’s gift bags (this year, we had a surplus in storage but they are always willing to donate a box).

Mucho Gusto donated burritos for everyone including the kids, teachers and volunteers. Flint is the point of contact for head-counts and delivery.

Partnered Solutions IT donated drinks (water and juice) to the event. We made sure to have at least one bottle of water for each volunteer and Pearl Buck worker, and one juice box per child. As a courtesy to our sponsor, offering to pick-up the beverages in advance of the project (or buy with donated funds), is a consideration.

It's important to remember to identify a 20-30 volunteer with a truck large enough to carry 25 – 35 trees to Pearl Buck center after the event. The trees are baled (branches tied tightly in twine), but still take up quite a bit of space.

This year, we designated an additional 20-30 member to spearhead arts & crafts. Haley Schuman took the lead and coordinated beaded candy cane pipe cleaner ornaments, drawing pages and stickers/crayons for the kids. Avoid all things glue. Having two craft options was helpful for children of varying abilities; having a finished craft product as an example was helpful.

Project Recommendations/Tips

- 1) Get firm numbers from Pearl Buck about number of kids attending **and** not attending the event. Being able to provide correct numbers to all of the different organizations donating things is important.
- 2) Communicate weather contingency plan to volunteers, partner agencies and sponsors a week in advance of the project date.
- 3) On the volunteer sign-up sheet, consider allowing volunteers to denote if they would prefer to skip the project in the event of a weather contingency plan being implemented. We noted that fewer volunteers (about two thirds), were needed between Northern Lights and PBC (more teachers are involved when the project is carried out on-site).
 - a. Of the committed volunteers, one third should head to Northern Lights and one third to PBC, releasing the remaining third to not participate.
 - b. Pre-cut trees are a godsend. The Schutttes provided this without request this year; we highly recommend confirming pre-cuts beforehand, if the contingency plan is implemented.
- 4) The distribution of ornament/light bags (Home Depot donation), was done by PBC teachers at the close of the day (volunteers had already left). This was done to limit the chaos, as the bags are identical.

Project Organization

Project Chair:

- Contact Pearl Buck
 - Schedule date, headcount (including food allergies for catering), and weather contingency plan. PBC will coordinate teachers and a bus (if needed).
- Contact Northern Lights Tree Farm
 - Confirm event date, confirm discount tree price. Lynn was fairly swamped during Thanksgiving - a phone call to communicate was better (email has been used effectively in past years).
- Contact food sponsor
 - This has been Westraunt Concepts in the past, typically working with Flint Livingston, Catering Manager.
 - Schedule date and time, confirm number of lunches needed, confirm pickup/delivery details, and confirm food allergies.
- Contact the media. In years past, this has been an issue because of the lack of photo/video release authorization from PBC preschoolers. However, Jaclyn Umenhoffer (PBC) was able to secure and confirm photo release authorizations and provided photos from the day for social media. Molly Kennedy (PBC) and PR Chair connected to draft a press release.
 - Work with 20-30 PR Committee for press release
 - Be sure to forward released photos from the project to Social Media Chair and Newsletter Chair
- Create sign-up sheet and put on clipboard 4-6 weeks before event.
- Project chair, co-chair and unofficial craft expert should plan to arrive to the event 30 minutes prior to kids' arrival (approximately 10am).
- Direct volunteers during the event.

- Write thank you letters to donors.

Project Co-Chair:

- Shop for and prepare crafts table.
 - Contact Northern Lights to confirm they have a table available.
- Contact Home Depot
 - Request donation of aprons, lights, ornaments, and Santa and Elf; schedule time to pick up gift bags.
- Contact Arnold Law (Rogelio Cassol) to request funds to cover cost of Christmas trees.
- Contact Cosmos Creations
 - Request donation of snacks
- Solicit drinks donations from IT Partnered Solutions (Robert Steck or Chris Hayes).
- Solicit glove donations (Terri Baker usually donates).
- Help set up the event.

Project Timeline

Late Oct/Early Nov:

- Contact Pearl Buck Center to schedule a date.
 - The first Wednesday in December has traditionally worked well, with the second Wednesday as a backup date.
- Contact Northern Lights Christmas Tree Farm
- Contact food sponsor
- Contact Home Depot
- Signup sheet to clipboard (Late Oct)

Mid November:

- Purchase craft supplies (or ensure sufficient supplies are in storage).
- Talk with PR Committee for press release
- Pick up Home Depot gift bags, confirm date of event for Santa Claus (training was a potential conflict for Santa)

Day before Event:

- Confirm with food sponsor for pickup/delivery
- Send out reminder email to all volunteers

Day of (or before) event:

- 8:15am confirm with Pearl Buck that weather is acceptable. If not, contact club members
- Schedule may vary, but ~10:30am start time, 12:30pm end time (1:30pm end time for the few volunteers delivering trees) has worked well in the past.
- Have fun!

Mid December:

- Send thank you notes.
 - May consider drafting notes in advance due to Chair and Co-Chair holiday schedule.

Project Financials

Please see "pearlBuckBudget2016.xlsx" attached to this report.

Note that this year, as in years past, this project had very little actual cost to the club (Moss Adams covered \$25 for craft supplies) due to generous donations by our community partners, and the very generous discounting of trees by Northern Lights. There was no indication this year that these relationships will change between now and 2016, and they should be approached again for continued partnership.

List of Prior Chairs

2016: Emily Gray
2015: Alex Harris
2014: Robert Steck
2013: Brian Jones
2012: Josh Kinsley
2011: Kate Miles
2010: Nathan Oeming
2009: Micah Adams
2008: Liesl McLean

Contact List

Dena Amend
Development Director (resource for press release and media relations)
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Development Director (resource for press release and media relations)
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Northern Lights Christmas Tree Farm

Bob & Lynn Schutte ("Shew-tee"), Owners (Really, just Lynn until day of event)
(541) 746-5161
36777 Wheeler Road
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Mucho Gusto

Flint Livingston (prefers text messages day-of event)
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The Home Depot

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Terri Baker

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Cosmos Creations

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