

Brentwood High benefits as Santa's Trees celebrates 25 years

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Amid the smell of Christmas trees, hot cider, and a chill in the air, Santa's Trees proprietor Jim McLeod waxed poetic about his humble beginnings in the Christmas tree business, Dec. 1 as he marked 25 years of Santa's Trees. Then he presented a \$5,000 check to Kevin Keidel, principal of Brentwood High School.

"There's no better business than selling Christmas trees. Every customer who comes to see us is happy, and we love to see the smiling faces of local families each holiday season. After 25 years here, we feel like we've grown up with Williamson County, so it's wonderful to be able to give back to the community with these yearly donations and contribute to the education of Brentwood High School students."

Santa's Trees, established by McLeod at the tender age of 17, has been making donations of this magnitude to Brentwood High School for the past 14 years, with this year bringing the sum total to \$70,000 overall since the partnership began. He believes there were additional funds in the past as well.

Before accepting the check, Keidel expressed his gratitude for Santa's Trees' generosity.

"I can't tell you how fortunate Brentwood High is to work with Jim and the entire Santa's Trees group every Christmas," Keidel said. "These \$5,000 yearly donations have added up to \$70,000 over the course of our partnership, and we're so grateful for the tremendous difference this money has made in educating Brentwood students."

McLeod recalled the exact day he started selling trees.

"It was Dec. 1 when we opened on Hillsboro Road in Grassland," he said. "We

were one of the first tree lots in Williamson County. I remember I had just gotten back from a UT versus Vandy game where I had oranges thrown at me. After the game I came back and opened the first location.”

McLeod has been at the helm of the Grassland location for 25 years and in Brentwood since 1996 having taken on the business from Sonny Crews. Over the years, McLeod took over some of the lots from Crews when the latter got out of the Christmas tree business.

Since 1996, Santa’s Trees has moved around the neighborhood a bit. According to McLeod the seasonal lot has been located at the current Harris Teeter site and then to the present location adjacent to the parking lot at U.S. Bank, Franklin Road, Brentwood.

“It’s a circus here every Christmas,” said McLeod, “The folks at H.G. Hill Realty and U.S. Bank generously allow us to encroach every year. We celebrate our relationship with them.”

Patti Mook, of U.S. Bank said, “We love having Santa’s Trees here. It brings the spirit of Christmas to our location.”

Keidell, who is a former University of Tennessee fraternity brother of McLeod’s, said, “The relationship between Santa’s Trees and Brentwood High School is phenomenal. Santa’s Trees is an asset to the whole community. We are very appreciative of Santa’s trees. In these economic times, we are especially grateful and appreciative of these donations.”

As the Brentwood High School principal for the past eight years, Keidel appreciates the annual donation from Santa’s Trees. Each year the funds are turned over to the PTO which used the funds in combination with other funds to purchase technology, teaching materials, lab specimens, band instruments, athletic equipment and other items for the school.

McLeod said he owes a great deal of his success to his loyal supporters, including his parents Jim and Shirley, and employees, who are like family, Alex Reinhart and Fred Jacobs, who have been at Santa’s Trees for 10 years; Bobby “Buda” Baskin, a 25-year-employee and Terry Hudson, who has been with the organization for eight years.

For more information, visit www.santastrees.com.