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The Angel Tree at Post Oak Mall. Photo by Joshua L. Hobson/The Battalion.

Giving

Continued from page 3

Jeffcoat said.

Angel Tree also employs measures to ensure the legitimacy of the people who sign up for help.

The Angel Tree program allows donors to feel assured that their gift will go to someone who truly needs it. Last year alone, Angel Tree was able to provide gifts for more than 3,000 children.

Another way people can get involved and help during the holidays is through meal programs such as Twin City Missions' Community Café. Community Café feeds three meals a day to its clients, and anyone can have one meal a day. This program reaches 88,000 people each year, making it what organizers say is a valuable asset to the community. The work of volunteers helps many people receive something most Texas A&M students take for granted each day.

Ron Crozier of Twin City Mission said volunteer oppor-

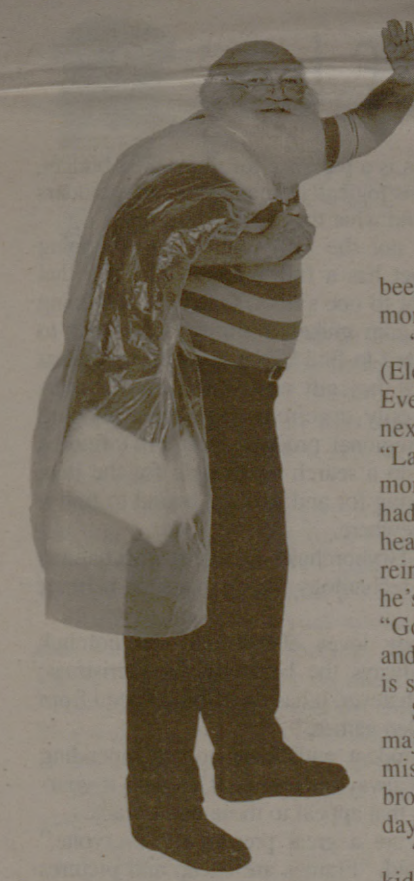
tunities exist in their retail stores and support services. Crozier said during the holidays there is an increased openness in people and an increased desire to do something for those who are less fortunate.

Jeffcoat said the Salvation Army helps provide people with food for Thanksgiving. She said programs like this are important because the aid from the program may be all they get. These programs also help reach older community members, many of whom have no families at all.

While many students are faced with an even more hectic daily schedule during the holidays, the benefits of helping someone else can outweigh the loss of personal time. Jeffcoat said helping others is a wonderful experience.

"You get to meet a lot of new people and give the gift of giving," she said.

By Matt Pickard



Must be Santa

been just as much fun as a mom.

"The most fun is putting (Elena) to bed on Christmas Eve and waking her up in the next morning," Bacon said. "Last year she woke up in the morning and she said, 'Mom, I had sugar plums dancing in my head last night and I heard reindeer on the roof, so I know he's been here,'" Bacon said. "Going downstairs with her and watching her expressions is so classic."

Senior electrical engineering major Brandon Turner said he misses the fun that Santa brought to the Christmas holidays.

"It was a lot more fun as a kid," Turner said. "Now I know everything I am going to get a week before I get it."

Most children, especially as they get older, want to know if the Santa Claus they are talking to is the real one. Park said one of his favorite parts of working at the mall is convincing kids that he is indeed Santa.

He became Santa Claus. Park said it's important for kids to experience the magic of this time of year, and he is glad he can be a part of it as Santa. "It's not about some fantastic individual who can bring whatever you want whenever you want it. It's about fun," he said. "There's been a lot of controversy about Santa commercializing Christ's birthday, but the first Santa chose to do it to help children."

Amy Bacon, class of 1991, said she stresses the true meaning of the holiday to her four-year-old daughter, Elena, but also combines the fun and magic of Santa Claus.

"We've read the story about the first Santa Claus, about him leaving gifts for children and becoming a saint for children who were less fortunate," Bacon said. "She just thinks that he's the same person and he's just gotten older and older."

After enjoying the magic of Santa as a child, Bacon said it's

dinner, much less toys for the children.

Park contacted mall merchants and delivered a plethora of toys to the family on Christmas Eve. So, don't try to tell that little girl there's no Santa.

Another girl told Park that all she wanted for Christmas was for her dad to find a job.

Park tried to reassure the girl that he would do everything he could as Santa. But it wasn't enough for Park to just comfort her.

It just so happened that he knew of a worker looking to hire someone. He told the girl's mother who to call and to tell the man that Santa sent him.

The girl came back to see Santa later that month and was beaming from ear to ear because Santa had granted her a Christmas wish and her dad no longer had to look for work.

"That's what I feel it's all about," Park said, "keeping alive the hope, the giving, the caring. Keeping love alive and keeping fun alive."

Senior biomedical science major Michelle Marino said she misses that fun part of Christmas.

"I miss the fun of waking up on Christmas morning and seeing what Santa brought me," Marino said. "It's still fun now, but as a kid it was more magical because it was always a mystery of how Santa pulled it off. He was always full of surprises."

Sophomore general studies major Courtney Potter said she misses the fun of having Santa at Christmas but it's hard to take it seriously once all the kids grow up.

"It's hard to get into it because no one in my family still believes in it," Potter said. "If I had a little brother or someone that believed in it I would. But it's hard when everyone in your family is grown up and doesn't believe in it."

But, don't tell Santa that.

By Dallas Shipp

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