

Firemen donate money for Angel Tree Christmas gifts

Pink and blue angels are hung on trees in Bankwest, First National Bank, Owens True Value and The Herald office. The angels are going fast but there are still many waiting for someone to take them off the tree so a child may have a better Christmas.

There are around 50 angels this year. On the back of each angel is written the age and a suggested size of the child for those who might want to purchase clothing.

Once a person selects a tag and the gift is bought, both the gift and tag should be returned to the place where the tree is located by Monday, Dec. 17.

Janet Jensen, St. Francis, along with Jennifer Milne, are in charge of coordinating the Angel Trees this year.

"A lot of children benefit greatly from the Angel Tree project," Mrs. Jensen said.

Last year, there were around 50 children who received gifts. These gifts averaged around \$25 each but no more than \$30.

If someone knows of a family who is having a difficult time making ends meet and could use



FIREMEN GIVE BACK — Fireman Scott Houtman checks out an Angel Tree gift. He presented a \$700 check from the fire department to Janet Jensen, one of the coordinators of the Angel Tree project, to be used for certificates.



CHECKING OUT the new fire equipment are firemen, George Harper and Dan Blair. Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

Firemen get needed equipment

By Karen Krien

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The St. Francis volunteer firemen are just that — volunteers.

Last summer, rain seemed to avoid the county and it was dry. Consequently, there were numerous pasture and wheat field fires and the firemen spent hours away from their jobs, homes, and sometimes, their beds, fighting fires. The year has not ended and the firemen already had over 60 runs.

Their equipment and firefighting clothing suffered. This fall, George Harper, fire chief, placed a request, asking for \$23,350 to replace some of the equipment. The city of St. Francis gave \$7,783, the county gave \$7,783 and the fire department, with donations and money in their budget, was able to come up with the rest of the money.

Chief Harper said that some of the equipment was 12 to 13 years old and was worn out. There were some instances where the equipment had belonged to former firemen and really didn't fit well.

The equipment was ordered and in September, boxes of equipment arrived.

Now, Mr. Harper said, each of the firemen have new helmets and two pairs of gloves (one pair for extractions and one for grass fires), and new boots. They also each have new emergency lights for their vehicles.

Two sets of bunker gear consisting of a coat and pants were purchased with each costing \$1,500. Chief Harper said he is working on a plan to gradually purchase equipment.

Also in the near future, the department will have a tanker truck to carry additional water to fires. The chief was able to get a truck from the Kansas Division of Wildlife and Parks and the county purchased the tank to put on it. The truck is tan and will need to be painted. The county crew has been attaching the tank to the truck.

In the past, farmers and businesses have helped fight fires by letting the firemen use their trucks with tankers to haul water. The Equity Co-op has let the department use their facility to fill the tanks.

We are so fortunate to live and work in this county, Mr. Harper said. When we ask for help, we get it. Last summer when it was so hot and firemen were needing water, sports drinks and snacks, within an hour of asking, there were cases and boxes of the needed supplies.

Giving back

During the Christmas season, firemen take the opportunity to give back to the community by giving to the Angel Tree project. Before the Thanksgiving holiday, the firemen smoked hams and sold them. They were able to give Janet Jensen, one of the

Angel Tree coordinators, a check for \$700 to help with expenses and purchase gift certificates at the Thrift Store. Each child will receive a certificate.



GEORGE HARPER gets the smoker fired up and ready to smoke the hams. The firemen smoked several hams a couple weeks ago. Herald staff photo by Tim Burr

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