Final week for Festival of Trees

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
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SENECA — The clock is ticking for the final week of the 2016 World of Energy Festival of Trees — and organizations sponsoring a tree this year are in for a special holiday treat.

Duke Energy's World of Energy at Oconee Nuclear Station is hosting the popular holiday tradition until Friday. So community residents have only two days to view nearly two dozen holiday trees decorated by local businesses and organizations. Tree viewing takes place through Friday, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Visitors are asked to vote for their favorite tree, and the winning organization will receive a $1,000 grant from Duke Energy to donate to its registered charity of choice.

But this year, for the first time, Duke will award second- and third-place winners. Second place will receive $750, and third place will receive $500. An announcement of the winning tree is scheduled for Jan. 4.

Oconee Heritage Center is participating in the Festival of Trees again this year. Although the museum didn't win the grant last year, director/curator Leslie White told The Journal in a recent interview that's not the only reason for participating.

"Obviously, the opportunity for much-needed funding is a big motivation, but we also enjoy the chance to use the Christmas tree to share and celebrate Oconee's history and heritage," she said. "If we win this year, we will likely use the funds to help create a nice display case for the Keowee Canoe, which is finishing its preservation process here at the Oconee Heritage Center."

YouthLink, a nonprofit organization with a mission designed to empower youth by giving them greater access to science, technology, engineering and math education and other community engagement activities, joined in on the festivities for the first time this year.

"We want to use our invitation to display our organization's mission and hopefully spark a conversation about the importance of supporting STEM education and local youth development," YouthLink director of development Msiba Dalton told The Journal recently. "If YouthLink wins the $1,000 prize for best tree, we will use the funds to continue to fund our Leadership Academy, STEM Academy, Strategies for Success Workshop and YouthLink 360 Athletics programs which are always free for our youth participants."



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Residents have only two more days to view the Festival of Trees at Duke Energy's World of Energy education center at Oconee Nuclear Station.

For more information on Festival of Trees activities, call (864) 873-4600 or email worldofenergy@duke-energy.com.

stephanie@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6686