

Duke hosts Festival of Trees to benefit nonprofits

BY JUSTIN LEE CAMPBELL
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"The mailbox makes me really, really proud," Williams said. "It's a really nice piece, and I can see

nonprofits

SENECA — The fifth annual Festival of Trees at Duke Energy's World of Energy offers an opportunity to gaze at beautiful Christmas trees, support nonprofits and mail those last-minute letters to Santa Claus.

Duke Energy spokesman Chris Rimel said the festival is a chance to promote nonprofit organizations in the Upstate and give back to the community.

"It's another way we can reach out and say, 'thank you' to the place that's our home," said Rimel.

The festival, which runs through Dec. 29, features 22 decorated trees sponsored by local organizations and businesses in the lobby of the World of Energy. The public gets to vote on their favorite tree.

The organizations of the four trees that receive the most votes will get a grant for the nonprofits of their choice. Rimel said the grants for the four winning trees from first to fourth place are \$2,500, \$1,500, \$1,000 and \$500, respectively. The winners will be announced on Dec. 30.

Rimel said the World of Energy decided to increase the grant amounts from the original figures of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 to only first-, second- and third-place winners.

Duke also commissioned a 5-foot-tall mailbox from Palmetto Custom Metal and Woodcraft in Seneca. Duke wanted the mailbox for children to mail their Christmas letters to Santa. Rimel said the World of Energy provides the paper and envelopes.

Palmetto Custom Metal and Woodcraft owner Jimmy Williams supervised the project and said his assistant Brandon Robinson "worked very

the kids being fascinated with it. It does make me proud."

Rimel said Duke is pleased with how well the festival has gone so far. The World of Energy

opened for a big crowd on Saturday.

"It has gone absolutely phenomenal," Rimel said.

The public can view the trees and drop letters to Santa in the mailbox 9

a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, according to Rimel. The World of Energy will be closed on Dec. 25-26.

justin@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6685
Follow on Twitter @jlcampbell90



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL
Above, Duke Energy is hosting its fifth annual Festival of Trees in the lobby of the World of Energy through Dec. 30. Duke will grant prize money to the organizations that are sponsoring the top four trees, which the public can vote on 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday. The World of Energy will be closed Dec. 25-26. Left, Zoe Kim and Claire Kim of Spring, Texas, drop off their Christmas letters to Santa Claus in a special mailbox Duke Energy commissioned for the fifth annual Festival of Trees at the World of Energy.