



T.J. LEBLANC / THE INDEPENDENT

COLBORNE -- Don Carmen revs up his chainsaw to cut down the perfect Christmas tree for Chris and Grace Lyon of Brighton.

COMMUNITY

Oh, Colborne Christmas Tree

Tree farmer makes holidays brighter for military families

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COLBORNE -- Over the hills and through the woods, families set out each year to find their perfect Christmas tree. Don Carmen wanted to make that search a little easier for military families this year.

Mr. Carmen, of J & D Trees, is one of ten Ontario Christmas tree farmers participating in the Trees for Canadian Troop Families Program, organized by the Canadian Christmas Tree Growers Association and supported by the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario.

"I work in Belleville, I drive down the 401, I work afternoon shifts and you see a lot of people standing on bridges all too often.

These people are making sacrifices up to and including the ultimate sacrifice," Mr. Carmen said.

"I wanted to be able to give a sign to those people working down there at CFB Trenton, that we care about you guys. It was an easy way for me to give something that is very much a part of me to them."

According to the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario, more than 1,000 Ontario families benefited from this outpouring of Christmas Spirit. Mr. Carmen's 50 trees spread Christmas cheer to 50 families at CFB Trenton this year.

"There are a lot of members of the Ontario Christmas tree grow-

ers association in the area. By me donating to CFB this year, maybe the rest of them will join in next year," Mr. Carmen said.

"It would be neat to go with 10 people from the area and present trees to the families."

In the meantime, with the Christmas tree drop off complete, Mr. Carmen has been busy selling Christmas trees to local residents wanting to carry on or perhaps start a new family tradition.

"To cut your own, it's a great family thing. It's about good family fun. You come up here on the weekend and you stand up here and there are families all over the place down there and they're running around, and there's snow

ball fights going on. It's kind of neat to be able to provide that for people," he said.

Barry Dougherty, family separation and reunion services coordinator with the Trenton Military Families Resource Centre, said they saw a lot of happy families when the trees were presented on Dec. 3.

"It was an overwhelming response. We ran out of trees. People are very delighted with the quality of trees.

"They were very, very excited to get them. It was one less stressor that they had to worry about in their lives," he said.

"Kudos to Don for donating these. We are hoping next year to have even more trees."

For more information on Trees for Canadian Troop Families Program, call the Christmas Tree Farmers of Ontario at 1-800-661-3530.

You can also visit www.canadianchristmastrees.ca.

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28