

# News

# Christmas joy doesn't have a price tag

BY PASHA CARROLL  
SUN REPORTER

I am convinced that everybody has an "Angel Tree" story.

If you have financial security, chances are you have encountered somebody who isn't so blessed. Hopefully, especially if it was a child, you took the time to care.

If you don't have a lot of money or grew up poor, the stories you have are even more personal. At some point an "angel" probably gave you a meal to eat, a coat to wear or a teddy bear to cuddle.

My Angel Tree story is one of my happiest memo-

ries.

My siblings and I have always been blessed with unconditional love from our mother. And on more than one Christmas, it was the only thing she had to give.

I was eight-years-old. My mother had finally fled my alcoholic, abusive father and after months of living on friend's couches, she got us into the perfect little house.

It was white and she had painted all the trim blue. Snow touched all of her plants hibernating in the little garden in back that she had perfected in the fall before the first frost.

This was the last Christmas that all seven of us kids would live under the same roof. My oldest sister, Gleamer, is 10 years older than me. She was getting ready to graduate high school and move into her own world. My sister Sunshine was 16 and a month away from having my first niece, Samantha.

We were all together, we had no money, there were



eight of us, all living in a three-bedroom house, and it was the best Christmas of my life.

On Christmas Eve we decorated our freshly axed Charlie Brown tree with strings of popcorn and green and red chains made out of construction paper. Our ornaments were baked out of flour, water and food coloring.

People from our church that had jobs and money but no family came to ours. I remember one guy, Rick, strumming the guitar and Sunshine rocking in a chair rubbing her huge belly.

We stayed up late

enough to see Santa, singing Christmas carols and church hymns.

I fell into an exhausted slumber, a sister on each side of my bed. I didn't expect, or really remember wanting a room full of wrapped gifts when I woke up.

But when my eyes fluttered open, the bright glare off the fresh snow screaming into the room, I staggered to our homemade Christmas tree.

There was a mound of presents, big and little, wrapped brightly and unevenly.

I don't remember what I got, I don't even remember if more than one of those gifts were for me. But I will always remember the night before, decorating the tree and singing songs until my lungs were about to burst.

I suspect that those people who shared a special Christmas Eve with us gave my mother money for the gifts or even went out and bought them on their own. Nobody ever took the

credit for giving us those gifts. I think they wanted us to believe my mother had gotten them by herself.

There are kids out there that won't expect to see a single gift, or even a tree. There are kids out there that won't have a place to sleep or a Christmas ham to eat. Hopefully, they will have a family like I did, to make it special. Unfortunately, so many of the kids out there don't have a mother like mine.

If I could, I would invite all of those kids home with me, but I can't (besides I am sure my mother has already invited more than a few wayward souls.) Instead, I will do all I can, give away clothes, food and my time during the holiday season.

I am also going to choose an "angel" and hopefully the material gift I give will be a small comfort in the cold world they are forced to endure all year long. I hope you can find it in your heart to give too.

## Goodbye

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his family and that they are happy to have him back. He said as a commissioner he worked anywhere from 20 to 60 hour weeks.

"The job will take anything you can give it," he said. "I did the best I could, I gave it (the job) 120 percent."

Pauls said that there were projects he was happy to be a part of, such as the bike path, which started before he was a commissioner and is still ongoing.

"The reward is knowing that you did a good job," Pauls said. "Others remember what you didn't do."

County Commissioner, Larry Jones presented Rees with a Certificate of Appreciation at the meeting and there is one waiting for Pauls as well.

"It has been a pleasure working with them," Jones said.

## OWC Spring advising and orientation

New students who wish to enroll at Okaloosa-Walton College for classes that begin in January should complete the admissions and orientation process by Nov. 22 to be eligible to register early for classes.

New student orientations will be held Nov. 16 at 8:30 am at the OWC/UWF Fort Walton Beach Campus. Call (850) 729-6922 or (850) 892-8100 for information.

OWC has an open-door admissions policy and application for admission is free of charge. Appointments for individual advising sessions are also available. The OWC Schedule of Classes is available at [www.owc.edu](http://www.owc.edu).

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**South Walton/Residential**

112Acre - Santa Rosa Beach short walk to Gulf ..... \$214,700  
Inlet Beach - 186 x 150 lot with 2BR/1BA house - lot may be split ..... \$300,000  
Gulfview Lot - 114 ac. Blue Mountain Beach w/pool & well ..... \$575,000  
Seaside Beach - Resort residential pools & beach access large lot ..... \$495,000  
Mark Bayou Area Lot - (75' x 150') Lg. old oak very private ..... \$209,000  
2.5 Acres w/ 2 Houses - 700' w/ beach horses are allowed approx. only no wetland ..... \$1,795,000

**Commercial & Residential**

7 Acres +/- - Corner of C-393 and Churchill Bayou paved roads all utilities ..... \$2,000,000  
Grayton Beach - 2 lots 2/2A some wetland/commercial & residential ..... \$280,000 for both  
Nixville Floor Upper - 200 sq. ft. and large lot in town ..... \$40,000

**Business / Land**

20 Acres - Light industrial 660' on C-23 south of US Hwy 98 ..... \$2,000,000  
Corner Hwy. 98 & Veterans Rd. - Paved all 4 sides - SW corner (.7 acre) ..... \$250,000  
Corner C-30-A & C-23 - 2 Bldgs. comm. great income producer Gulf view ..... \$1,300,000  
Distribution Center in SR 8 - 15,200 sf warehouse 5 bays 2000+ sf office ..... Lease \$210,000/yr  
1 acre parking for 50 cars ..... \$1,250,000  
Warehouse Duplex - 6,250 SF brand new in Santa Rosa Beach ..... \$775,500

**North & Central Walton**

One Acre (Cleared & Filled) - South Freeport close to bay paved street ..... \$189,000  
Corner Hwy. 90/331 & Chabot Dr. - 1000 SF Bldg. on 200' lot in DFS ..... PERMITTING \$40,000  
Mark Creek - Access cleared corner lot ..... \$75,000  
Creskade - Cul-de-sac wooded ..... \$70,000  
Bay Grove Road - Great view of Bayou ..... \$190,000

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