

## Missouri Christmas Tree Farmer Spurs Local American Legion Chapter Trees for Troops Participation

By: Elizabeth LeBrun- 9/27/2021

The owners of Meier Horseshoe Pines Christmas Tree Farm in Jackson, Missouri have participated and supported Trees for Troops (T4T) since the program started in 2005. Steve Meier gave a T4T presentation to his local American Legion Post 158 (Altenthal/Joerns) many years ago, which has made T4T an organizational priority ever since. In 2020, the post was unable to hold their annual fundraising event due to Covid and had to downsize most annual programs. However, they did not cut or diminish the T4T donation. "Instead, they "passed the hat" to their members and raised the annual donation plus more. That's how dedicated these folks were," says Meier. "With support like this, our troops will always be able to celebrate one of the most important holidays of the year!"

Meier and his wife, Teresa, feel that military members are the reason that they have the right to own their family business. "Our freedom depends on the dedication of our military personnel," says Meier. "Therefore, we have been supporters of the Trees for Troops program since its inception. Our active military needs to know they are appreciated for their dedication." The Meiers became involved in the Christmas SPIRIT Foundation and T4T after attending a moving presentation at a National Christmas Tree Association meeting. "At that point, it was not a decision to be made, it was a determination **to do**," explains Meier.

His 40-year-old farm now sends a Christmas card signed by the entire staff of approximately 25 workers to accompany each donated tree, and regularly receives feedback from recipients. "We have received pictures of their trees, and a return Christmas card from many of the families with comments on how much their tree means to them," says Meier. "Often the comment is made that, without the donation, the recipient would not be able to celebrate Christmas with a real tree. So many times, we have heard that the real tree has brought a little bit of home to them when they cannot be with the ones they love."

Meier notes that we can't all be active in the military, but we can all support those that are. "Being away from the ones we love at this special holiday has to be demoralizing for these men and women and their families," says Meier. "I sincerely wish that each American would put themselves in the recipient's place mentally, to understand what such a small item can do to fill a person's heart with the feeling of home once again."