

Press Release
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For Release: Today

Student wins trip to Washington, DC to US Capitol Christmas Tree Lighting

The US Capitol Christmas Tree will be lit by in Washington, DC on December 5th and ten-year - old Branden Young of Randolph, VT will be there!

Branden, a fifth grader at Randolph Elementary School, is one of more than 1,000 Vermont public, private and home school students who made ornaments for the Vermont tree chosen to be this year's US Capitol Christmas Tree. Randolph Elementary School is just one of over 50 schools that joined community artists and corporate sponsors in making 4,991 ornaments for the 55-ft Capitol Tree and over 70 small companion trees delivered to Washington, DC last week. The Ornament Project Committee was chaired by Gail Kilkelly, Coordinator for the Arts at the Vermont Department of Education and Erin Sheridan of Ghostwriters in Rutland.

Keeping in mind the project theme, "Bringing an Old Fashioned Holiday to the Nation" Randolph Elementary School Art teacher Rebecca Carleton chose the American classic painting "Peaceable Kingdom" by Edward Hicks (1780-1849) as her inspiration. Students studied the painting then designed ornaments representing the animals depicted in the right side of the painting. Lions and lambs were favorites of the students, and all students worked on many aspects of the design and creation of the ornaments. Ornaments were made large enough and of durable materials so that they met the requirements set out by the Architect of the Capitol for outdoor ornaments.

After working on the ornaments, students were eligible to enter a drawing to receive a free trip to the Tree Lighting. Branden Young's ticket was drawn by VT Commissioner of Education Richard Cate. Arts Coordinator Gail Kilkelly called Branden's mother, Carrie Young and informed her that her son had won the trip. Both then met at Randolph Elementary School to inform the principal and his art teacher, Rebecca Carleton. Branden found out that he had won during the 5th and 6th grade chorus and band rehearsal for a Veteran's Day program.

Branden will represent all Vermont students at this important national event. When asked by Mrs. Kilkelly if he would accept this award and the responsibilities that went with the honor, he smiled and enthusiastically said, "Yes" in front of his school mates, mother and school staff.

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Through the generosity of Southwest Airlines and donors to the project, Branden will be accompanied to Washington, DC by his mother, Carrie Young and art teacher Rebecca Carleton. Additional community artist winners traveling with Branden will include community artist and music teacher, Carol Crouce and art teacher Cynthia McPhetres both of the Rochester Elementary, and George Lam, wood sculptor of Huntington, VT. The group will be lead by Gail Kilkelly.

The group of winners will meet up with committee member and trip coordinator Brenda Jones of Bennington at the Albany airport on Tuesday, Dec 4th. The entire group will be joined by veterans from a number of area Veteran's Homes who will also travel to the Tree Lighting with the winners. Southwest Airlines will hold a reception in honor of the efforts of the winners, the veterans, and the Bennington Chamber of Commerce before the group boards their flights.

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