Kelsey Lorden, Savanna Donovan, Maria Daneault, and Sophie Larochelle stand behind some of their beautiful poinsettias as they also display the kissing balls, center pieces, and wreaths being offered for sale to the public over the holiday season at the Winnisquam Regional High School's Agricultural Center in Tilton.
Photo: Donna Rhodes, *Winnisquam Echo*

Savanna Donovan Participates In Winnisquam Agricultural Program

By Donna Rhodes
Winnisquam Echo staff

Condensed from the December 8 *Echo*

Industrious students of the Winnisquam Regional High School Agricultural program have set up a holiday shop of their own, where they have been growing poinsettias and creating their own specialized wreaths, kissing balls and two-candle table centerpieces.

"It really gets to be a lot of fun out here working when Sophie (Larochelle) starts singing Christmas songs while we work," laughed junior Maria Daneault of Sanbornton. It's serious business for the group, though, as they are busy fulfilling the many orders pouring into the center each day for their holiday ornaments and wreaths.

In one corner of the greenhouse work area, Savanna Donovan [of Andover] and Kelsey Lorden were busy creating kissing balls from Styrofoam, which is heavily festooned with plenty of greenery and ornaments. Welch said the two were real perfectionists and worked hard to produce a professional product for their customers.

"The hardest part is making sure you keep it full and don't leave any gaps," said Donovan as she meticulously added more balsam to her latest piece.

"I'm making a barn wreath right now for a special order, and only half way around it, I've already used over 40 clusters," she said as she wrapped wire to secure yet another bundle of greens to the 30-inch frame.

Besides the greenery, the students began planning for their annual holiday sales as early as last July, when they started more than 250 plugs to grow their own poinsettia plants. Under instructor Janet Rosequist, the six students in the Plant Science Class paired up to tend to the three varieties of plants.

As Christmas nears they have been rapidly selling their beautiful selections of red, pink, and the always popular, variegated Jingle Bells poinsettias. As the five girls in the class worked their magic on the greens last week, Tyler Davis, the lone male in this year's class, was busy tending to the potted plants. "I'm making sure they're all watered properly, dead leaves are pruned, and they're all presented well for people who stop in to buy a plant. Presentation is really important," Davis said.

Most of the senior students in the class have plans to continue their education in horticulture or forestry, in one form or another. Heimlich, whose father owns Landscapes, Inc. in Belmont, plans on one day becoming a landscape architect while Davis, of Franklin is leaning more towards forestry.

Regardless of future plans though, all of the students said they've gained a lot of knowledge through both the class and their holiday business. Daneault said she really appreciated the hands on experience in working with plants and Larochelle agreed. "It's nice to have a class that isn't so structured toward lectures, but where you're working and learning at the same time," she said.

The Winnisquam Ag Center serves students from seven local schools [including Merrimack Valley High School, which Savanna attends] and works each year to serve surrounding communities.

You can reach Donna Rhodes at DRhodes@SalmonPress.com.

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AE/MS Parent-Teacher Organization

By Carmen Bates
AE/MS PTO

We began the year with a rest, as December was such a full and busy month for us. We received our Square One art and heard that everyone really loved this new company. It was a great fundraiser for us. Thank you to all the staff who helped create the art and to the families who ordered.

Our PTO Polar Express movie night was a huge success. Thank you to Mel Gotthardt for making the bells; to all the parents who baked cookies; and to Michelle Newton for picking up the chocolate milk.

Our popcorn/fruit Fridays are a big hit, and it would not be possible without Cate August, Jeanny Preston, and many other volunteers.

We had amazing pictures taken at Grandparents Thanksgiving by Alicia Labelle, and anyone who would like a copy can have one. Thank you so much, Alicia, for jumping in and capturing this important day.

Sportswear has been delivered, and thank you to Amy Fecteau for taking care of this.

The Eagle Store will be opened monthly. Thank you to Mel for stocking it with great items and to Megan Sweeney for helping run it.

We had a great time at the Bluewater Farm Christmas party and are happy to be included in this tradition with them. Thank you to all who provided baked goods for the event.

Many, many wreaths were decorated by many volunteers ... thank you for sharing the job with us.

The Holiday Shoppe was a huge hit in the gym, and I still can't believe all the items that were there. Thank you to all the parents and staff who gave, bought, and helped pull off this day for the children and their families.

Thank you to all parents who help with the winter program. Anyone is always welcome to come help on Friday with popcorn/fruit. Here is the upcoming schedule: January 27, fruit; February 3, popcorn; February 10, popcorn; February 17, popcorn; and February 24, fruit. Let me know if you would like to buy some fruit or can come in one morning to help out.

Coffee Duty

We are looking for someone to take charge of the coffee ordering for the staff. We have a Keurig machine in the lounge for the staff and visitors and need someone to place an order for the staff once a month. Also, it would be nice to have someone be sure the machine is clean and tidy.

We will be making snow cones for the students on Beach Day in February and will need ice and volunteers. Next meeting: Monday, February 13, at 6:30 PM at AE/MS. Questions: CarmenBates@comcast.net.

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