

features

Mall Santa has best seat in town

By Leigh Kelley

He knows all the children's secrets. He knows whether they are good or bad. He knows how high reindeer fly and what they eat. Ken Bartlett knows these things because he is Santa Claus.

Bartlett, a retired dining car steward for Southern Railways, is in his eighth consecutive year of "Santa Clausing" at the Asheville Mall. "I've worked with little kids all my life, especially Little League," says Bartlett. He says patience is a requirement for the job and some days are better than others. But he enjoys seeing the children and hearing what they have to say.

Bartlett talks about one little boy in particular. "I asked him if he'd been good. He said he'd been mean as a snake," Bartlett says laughing. "And I want you to know he was, too."

Then there was the little girl who wanted a "real live baby doll." Bartlett grins and says he told her that he would have to talk to her mother and father about that.

Bartlett says he remembers one child who had an extraordinarily long list of requests. The child said, "Santa, now I want you to bring me everything I've asked for." Bartlett said he asked the child why. "Because you gypped me last year," the child replied.

The job does have a sad side, though. Bartlett said he especially remembered one little boy who said, "Santa, I don't want anything. All I want is for my daddy to come back home from Vietnam." Bartlett said, "I told him I'd pray for him and do the best I could to get him back home. It just broke my heart."

Mrs. Bartlett nods in agreement with her husband. "It's a bad day when the children from the orthopedic hospital come over." She says quietly, "They just break your heart. They put them up on his lap with those old hard braces on their legs and they're all smiles."

Children aren't the only ones who come to see Santa. His visitors range from 3-day-old babies to 90-year-old senior citizens. The senior citizens love to see Santa, Mrs. Bartlett says. She adds, "They get as excited as the little kids do." Bartlett says college girls come to him and ask for "boyfriends and those fancy sports cars."

What does Bartlett think about his role as Santa Claus? He says he believes that the notion of Santa Claus is an important one to believe in. "Yes, I especially think that about Santa Claus," he says softly. "Because people need to have something to believe in, to believe that someone loves them."



Ken Bartlett in his favorite disguise as the old elf himself.

WUNF gets facelift, new director

By Carol Whitener

A new station manager, a new control board, and an increase in wattage are just some of the changes radio station WUNF-FM is making.

In June, WUNF hired a new station manager, Rachael Jeffreys. This was one of the first changes to take place in the studio, located on the second floor of the Lipinsky Center. Jeffreys explained many of the changes that are occurring at the station.

A non-profit corporation, Western North Carolina Public Radio Incorporated, is going to control the station instead of UNCA. "The license has not been changed, but will be soon," Jeffreys said.

The corporation is a group of 16 members of the community who want to have a National Public Radio (NPR) station.

Jeffreys explained, "NPR is a network of around 230 stations across the country, most of which are on college campuses, which are all public with no commercials."

Since NPR stations are non-commercial, they are supported

mostly by the community.

To become a NPR station WUNF will have to be on the air 18 hours a day, have five full-time paid staff members, have a certain amount of floor space, and have separate control and production rooms, Jeffreys explained. Right now WUNF meets all the requirements except being on the air long enough and having enough full time employees.

Jeffreys is the only full-time paid employee and WUNF is on the air only 15 hours a day, from 9 a.m. until midnight seven days a week.

Jeffreys is familiar with NPR because she worked for a NPR station (WEPR) on the campus of Clemson University in South Carolina before she came to work at WUNF.

At that time Clemson had two campus radio stations. When cutbacks were made, WEPR's funding was cut, forcing it to close in December 1981.

When Jeffreys got the offer to work for WUNF, she was "glad" to take it. Jeffreys moved to Asheville with her husband of five and a half years, writer Christian Hamilton.

"I have the chance to build a station," Jeffreys said. "This is a real challenge."

The board of directors of the community corporation decided WUNF should go to 100 watts, so the station could cover a larger area and reach more listeners.

In order to increase from 10 to 100 watts the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has to approve the increase. "The request has to sit on a lot of people's desks," Jeffreys said.

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