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Tree lot gives families early gift for Christmas  
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ARLINGTON - After Mission Arlington delivered most of the 60 Christmas trees donated to the charity last weekend, one 10-foot pine remained.

"It was too big for anyone's apartment. But one family said they had a perfect place for it in their living room," Mission Arlington Director Tillie Burgin said yesterday. "They had never had a tree before. I mean, they just stood there and looked at it."

The trees were a surprise gift from Marcia Dickenson and her son William Dickenson, who own A-Quality Lawn and Tree Service. The central Arlington business had planned to continue sales through last weekend, but because of the steady drizzle, the owners figured business would be so slow that it made more sense to donate the trees Saturday, two days earlier than planned.

Mission Arlington picked up the trees and delivered them to the families.

"I started getting phone calls that night from kids calling from pay phones saying 'thank you.' It was just wonderful," Burgin said.

It's rare to get tree donations so far ahead of Christmas, Burgin said. Local tree lots begin giving away their inventory around Dec. 22, when sales drop off.

Marcia Dickenson said she wanted to give families a week before the holiday to enjoy the sight and fragrance of the trees.

"I would rather give them away and take a loss than to throw them away," she said.

The trees, the business' entire remaining inventory, were worth about \$1,400, William Dickenson said. Most of the trees had been "flocked," covered with a white, flame-retardant cotton-and-paper material that imitates snow.

"A couple of trees were 12-foot-tall Nobles, and these run about \$100. It was a gorgeous tree," William Dickenson said. "When I saw families out there getting the trees, I looked at one of my guys and said, 'That's what it's all about.' It just breaks my heart. Even if they can't afford to put lights on it, at least they have it."

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