



THE

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KEEPING SPIRITS HIGH



REPORTER PHOTO BY SARAH LANG

Valerie Erskine, of Lebanon, gift-wraps a book Thursday morning at Whitestown's Amazon.com warehouse for the "Gift Wrap Your Holidays with a Smile" program. "I like to dress up like this to keep everyone's spirits up," she said of her reindeer antlers and Christmas sweater.

## Volunteers spread holiday cheer, help at Amazon.com warehouse

BY SARAH LANG  
The Lebanon Reporter

**WHITESTOWN** — Volunteers playing the part of "Santa's helpers" are filling the Amazon.com warehouse in Whitestown this month for the "Gift Wrap Your Holidays with a Smile" program.

Members from 37 non-profit organizations are gift-wrapping shipments for Amazon.com customers, earning \$.75 or \$1 for their organization for each item wrapped, depending on the shift.

"It's good for the volunteers and really good for us, too," said General Manager Keith Elam. "It's very, very helpful because we have a large amount to gift-wrap closer to the holidays."

Two volunteers share a small cubicle with everything they need — spools of ribbon on a rod for easy access, pre-cut portions of wrapping paper labeled for DVDs, books, etc., tape and scissors. Forty cubicles surround a large conveyor belt where boxes full of colorful gift-wrapped orders are placed to be shipped.

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## Cheer

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Around 20 volunteers were wrapping Thursday morning, but Elam said by next week they will probably reach the 80-person capacity.

"There are thousands and thousands and thousands of presents," he said.

Some groups have even signed up to gift-wrap overnight, Elam said.

Many volunteers from Boone County organizations signed up to wrap, including Thorntown Elementary PTO, State Bank of Lizton (wrapping for the United Way of

Central Indiana), New Hope Christian Church in Whitestown, the Indiana Federation of Business and Professional Women in Zionsville, Lebanon Educational Foundation, Love INC of Boone County and the Lebanon Swim Club. Other groups come from surrounding areas, such as Crawfordsville, Brownsburg and Indianapolis.

Amazon.com held this program last year for the first time, but they've really expanded it this year and plan to continue to do so in the future, Elam said.

"I'm looking forward to next year," he said, explaining

that a lot of volunteers will already know how things work. "It's a great way to put yourself in the holiday spirit and earn money for your non-profit at the same time."

The program runs through Dec. 23, and groups are still contacting Amazon, wanting to get involved. Interested organizations should contact Janice Haak at [indl-giftwrap@amazon.com](mailto:indl-giftwrap@amazon.com) or at (317) 769-8012. Gift-wrapping tables are designed for wrapping while standing, so volunteers must be physically able to stand through their shift, which ranges from 5 to 10 hours. All volunteers must be at least 18 years old.