

# "O Christmas Tree" Holiday event at PRFTA



It is the iconic vision of Christmas where during Holidays, families gather, children smiling in anticipation and a feeling of goodwill spreads throughout the community. But for the few who serve in the military it can be bittersweet. Some are far away from home and some missing the company of loved ones, but on Dec 7, San Ramon Presbyterian Church (SRPC), the 191<sup>st</sup> Army Band and Camp Parks Morale Welfare and Recreation gave Camp Parks a moment of sharing and a time to remember love ones.

The event started with a traditional Christmas Tree lighting ceremony where the community gathered around the tree and sang seasonal favorites that gave the feeling of festiveness in the air. The 191<sup>st</sup> Army Band with the help of a local Girl Scout Troops filled the air with music until the moment came to light the tree. Then with a short countdown the Commander of PRFTA Garrison, Lt. Col. David James, gave the order to light the tree and with the lighting of tree came the singing of an old favorite carol "O Christmas Tree".

The ceremony then moved to the Community Activities Center where SRPC through its outreach program "Building Bridges", organized, decorated and provided food and desserts for what has come to be known as the Community Appreciation Celebration. Soldiers far away from home and families gathered to share in what can only be described in a classic Normal Rockwell painting where the convergence of community, tradition and food made for that almost perfect family event.

To add to the festivities the 191<sup>st</sup> Army Band played holiday classics with jazzy beats that harkened the big band sounds which many equate to a time of tradition and comfort as well cool entertainment. The memorable moment came when two Soldiers in the band stepped forward, dressed in their formal "Dress Blues" and played the ukulele. It was unexpected and made all the more grand by what was an effort by the whole band to provide the community with a feeling of closeness that one can only feel when you're with family.

"I want to thank everyone in our Community for coming out and celebrating with us", said Command Sgt Maj. Patrick McKie, who is the PRFTA Garrison Command Sgt Maj. "191st Band was outstanding and SRPC Building Bridges along with Spot Light Art Academy, The Girl Scouts and FMWR gave the Soldiers and families event to remember".

The evening concluded with a visit from Santa Clause capping an evening of community interaction worthy of a Rockwell moment.

Iconic, maybe. True? Absolutely!

