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## VFW finds money for kids' event

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**PARK HILLS** - For a 53rd year, last Saturday, VFW Post 1484 in Park Hills hosted 95 neighborhood children for a day of storytelling, magic and Santa. But lack of money almost made this the year without a VFW Christmas.

"There are lots of kids in the area who don't get much for Christmas, and that's why the post started it originally," Commander Ron Jones said.

The post does not market or advertise the event because members want to keep it local. Most of the families that attend live within walking distance.

Jennifer Current, president of the ladies auxiliary that organizes and funds the event, has been involved with it for the past five years.

"Just to see one or two of them cry, it touches your heart. They say this is unbelievable that people would do this," she said. "Things might be tough for them, but they got treated pretty good that day. They all get satisfied at least."

Jones remembers a touching moment from last year.

"When it's time for the kids to go up and sit on Santa's lap, we call them up by age, starting with the littlest ones," Jones said. "The 2- and 3-year-olds were in line, and I noticed a little boy crouched in the corner whimpering. I went over to him and sat on the floor to ask him what the matter was.

"He was crying because he wanted to talk to Santa really badly, and he was 4, so he had to wait. I whispered to him not to tell anyone, and I snuck him into the line.

"He beamed and was tickled to get in line. It just made me feel really good to be able to make a little one smile so much over something so small. These kids totally appreciate what they get. It is a privilege to be able to be a part of it."

This year, the event was almost canceled.

"The auxiliary had some financial problems," Current said.

The organization uncovered the embezzlement of more than \$350,000 last year.

"I went to the men, I said, 'You know we won't be able to have the children's Christmas thing this year.' They handed us \$1,500 and said, 'The kids will not do without.' We've got all the toys, and everything is paid for."

The post has a membership of 118 men and 76 women. It contributes several thousand dollars to a children's home, sports teams, nursing homes and churches.

"We got a lot of good people," Current said. "We've got some poor people, some people that are well-to-do, but we all pull together when it comes to Christmas time."

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