

Youth Center gets festive

Annual event celebrates 19th year

By Jeff Smith

jsmith@the-leader.com

CORNING - More than 120 kids, parents and local leaders fought through cold, snowy weather Wednesday evening to fill the Corning Youth Center and enjoy the center's 19th annual holiday dinner.

"We are so happy that so many people came (to the Youth Center) to enjoy the holiday season with us," said Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, executive director of Family Service Society Inc., which operates the Youth Center, moments before the meal was served. "We are excited to be able to hold our annual holiday dinner again this year. We again have a lot of helpers this year."

Helpers at the event included City Manager Mark Ryckman, Steuben County Legislator Hilda Lando, Corning Mayor Bill Boland, Reverend Lewis Brown, Corning Fire Chief Brad Davies, Corning City Councilman Diane Telehany, State Assemblyman Phil Palmesano, several city patrolmen and many others.

"We had a great time serving the kids Christmas Dinner at the Youth Center," said Ryckman moments after the dinner.



Santa and Mrs. Claus provided a holiday gift to dozens of children Wednesday after a holiday dinner at the Corning Youth Center. [JEFF SMITH/THE LEADER]

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“This year, several of our police officers came over to help - which everyone enjoyed.”

After enjoying the holiday dinner, the children at the event were provided gifts from Santa and Mrs Claus.

Ayers-Friedlander told the crowd that the annual event is a great opportunity to be able to come out (to the Youth Center) and to be together.

“I am imagining there are a few people here (Wednesday) that are very excited about some of the gifts they are going to find under the Christmas



Corning Fire Chief Brad Davies and Corning City Councilman Diane Telehany were two of the many helpers Wednesday serving food at a holiday dinner, at the Corning Youth Center. [JEFF SMITH/THE LEADER]

Tree,” Ayers-Friedlander said. “But there is a bigger and better gift we are going to celebrate tonight. Better

than all of those things you can wrap and put under a tree. That is our love and caring for each other.”

Eight-year-old Olivia Dyer said she enjoyed both the dinner and the present.

“It was a lot of fun,” Dyer said with a smile. “But I liked the cake better than the (Christmas) ham.”

Bianca Crandall, youth service director for Family Service Society, said each year the holiday dinner at the Corning Youth Center continues to grow.

“Every year we do this event and it helps bring out everyone in the community,” Crandall said. “It brings so many people to the Youth Center to enjoy the dinner and for the children to receive a holiday gift. Without all of the volunteers and donations from local companies this would not be possible.

“So I want to say thank you to all of them.”