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PRESS RELEASE

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University Health Services brightens holidays for area children

AMHERST, Mass. – There's a bare tree in a corner of the employee lounge at University Health Services (UHS), UMass Amherst's campus health center.

Last week, this "Giving Tree" held the holiday wishes of 50 children served by Children's Aid and Family Services of Hampshire County. The wishes were as varied as the children themselves, from young teens dreaming of a mall gift certificate to toddlers in need of winter coats. UHS staff members were invited to select an ornament with a child's first name, age and gift suggestions; within a few days, all were gone.

The Giving Tree project is being coordinated by Deb Warner, Patience Monty, Donna Williston and Kerry Naumowicz of UHS' Sterile Supply and Central Stores departments as part of FISH, an employee-led initiative to enhance the work environment.

The women were concerned about whether a small group like UHS could fulfill so many requests, but agreed they'd make it happen – even if it meant buying extra gifts themselves. They needn't have worried. UHS employees have a long tradition of helping others, from their colleagues to victims of disasters a world away. Now, all that's left is for the coordinators to deliver the mound of gifts to the agency's Northampton headquarters, where social workers will distribute them to the youngsters.

Children's Aid and Family Service of Hampshire County is a small, nonprofit social service agency offering adoption services, parenting support and more. UHS, UMass Amherst's fully accredited health center, serves students, faculty and staff with comprehensive care, referral and education services; visit www.umass.edu/uhs to learn more.