

New enterprise brings Christmas trees C.O.D.

By Teru Lundsten

His childhood dream was to one day own a Christmas tree farm. Live trees were a staple of Todd Miner's family's deeply embedded Christmas traditions.

Alas, he grew up to become

too busy or unable to go out and search for a real Christmas tree, even though they would love to have one.

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an electrical engineer. Gradually, however, he lost interest in that career, but his dream remained. He decided to pursue it.

When he started looking into it, Miner discovered that owning a Christmas tree farm is hard work and competitive, and starting one is even more so. But in the course of his research he found an as-yet-unfilled need: some people are

He had found his niche.

A year ago Miner founded TreeSleigh.com and began selling Christmas trees online. The business is the first of its kind in the nation. "We want to make having a real Christmas

tree as stress-free as possible," he says. "Now it's as simple as a few mouse clicks or a toll-free call. It



TreeSleigh.com owner Todd Miner (front) and Aaron Collier deliver a hand-selected fir to a Queen Anne condo. Photo by Bradley Enghaus

really couldn't be easier."

Based in Federal Way, the business has three employees and a fleet of three bright red vans to deliver a tree to your door. But their delivery service doesn't stop there. It also includes cutting off the end of the trunk, installing a stand, setting up the tree, adding water and vacuuming up any needles.

For an additional charge they will string lights or fully decorate the tree, and return after the holidays to remove and recycle the tree (disposal bags are free).

Five varieties of tree are available, all fir: Douglas, Grand, Fraser, Noble and Special Blue Noble, in heights from 5 to 12 feet. Base prices range from \$75 for the Douglas fir to \$150 for the Special Blue Noble.

Trees are grown on a local tree farm and individually selected by Miner. "People who get their trees from depart-

See TREES on back page

24 BACK PAGE

Magnolia News
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TREES, continued from front page

ment stores or roadside lots probably haven't seen trees this nice," he says. "Anyone who orders a tree from us in mid-December," he adds, "can expect the same high-quality tree as those who order in November."

Their delivery area encompasses cities north and south along the I-5 corridor, between Marysville and Tacoma. Trees can be delivered not only to houses but also

to apartments, condos, offices, restaurants, hospitals and retirement homes.

About 60 percent of their deliveries are to Queen Anne. "I can't really say why," says Miner, "but it's a hotspot. There are a lot of apartment buildings and condos there."

"The elderly and disabled are among our most loyal customers," he continues, "customers who otherwise would have merely a fake tree, or no tree at all."

Other products besides trees are available, including wreaths, stocking stuffers, Luna color-changing candles (sold year-round) and even a "fireplace DVD." If you don't have a fireplace, you can still have (if not the warmth) the visual and sound effects of one emanating from

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your TV. Do you prefer a roaring blaze or glowing embers? You can choose from the DVD's nine selections.

Miner is now married with two children. What kind of tree do they get? "A 6- to 7-foot Noble," he says. "Special Blues are in limited supply, so I don't keep one for myself."

For more information, log on to www.TreeSleigh.com or call toll-free 1-877-TREE-2-ME (1-877-873-3263).

