

Juveniles de-Christmas downtown

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A group of juveniles made downtown Bismarck a little less festive Thursday afternoon, but nobody complained to the authorities - probably because the juveniles were with the authorities.

"One guy holds, one guy climbs," directed South Central District Judge Bruce Romanick as three boys set out to use a ladder to take down Christmas banners.

About 15 juveniles, who are part of the South Central District Juvenile Drug Court or the South Central District Juvenile Court systems, cleaned up the Christmas decorations between Rosser Avenue and Main Avenue and between Third Street and Sixth Street under the direction of adult supervisors.

Leaving behind garbage bags full of yuletide joy in their path, the kids took down 80 red or green Christmas banners and took green evergreen garland from 60 poles downtown.

John Grinsteiner, a judicial referee, was in charge of the community service project. The court system paired up with the Downtowner's Association to provide a "meaningful community service project" for young people who owe community service hours, he said.

This is the second year young people have pitched in to clean up downtown, Grinsteiner said. Thursday's warm weather was a welcome improvement over last year's weather during the project, said Romanick, who heads up the juvenile drug court program.

"Last year, I think it was subzero," he said.

Projects like the one carried out Thursday afternoon give kids an end result where they can "help restore the community they affected," Grinsteiner said. The juveniles could be made to clean up garbage, but "I've found that that's not always effective," he said.

Romanick said such community service projects enable the young people to do their community service hours in a group rather than alone.

Stephanie Iwaniw, executive director of the Downtowner's Association, said the decorations were put up by inmates at the Bismarck Transition Center.

"It's all about volunteers," she said, pointing out that she is the only staff member of the association.