

## National Christmas Tree Ornament Project

On Monday, October 17, students enrolled in Lori Kissinger's Organizational Communication in Communities course assisted students with disabilities in creating ornaments for the National Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C.



Two ornaments created by VSA and Tennessee School for the Blind participants

Under the artistic direction of Yvette Crowden, 12 Tennessee School for the Blind students and past VSA Tennessee participants created Appalachian folk themed ornaments in collaboration with MTSU students, VSA Tennessee, and the Tennessee Arts Commission. During the event at MTSU's campus, the participants enjoyed cookies, Christmas music, a photo booth, and a meeting with Santa Claus. In addition to the ornaments made for the National Christmas tree, each participant received a stocking with an ornament for them to craft at home.

Organizational Communication in Communities is a course in the Experiential Learning (EXL) program that provides hands-on work and opportunities for its students, and students enrolled in this class played a major role in the logistics of the ornament project.



One of these students is Organizational Communication major Deborah Wilson. When asked about the class experience in the development of this project, Wilson stated, "This class has spent many weeks working to prepare for this event. We brainstormed and planned to make sure the kids who came would be happy. Mrs. Kissinger helped us along the way, giving us the necessary tools to make this a successful event."

In addition to the knowledge gained through planning the ornament event, students also receiving first-hand experience in how nonprofit organizations are operated. Political Science major April Carroll said, "This class has helped me tremendously with seeing how nonprofit works comes together. It has enhanced my interest in the nonprofit field. This event was so exciting to help plan and execute. It is a great joy to see the kids excited to create these ornaments and learn in this environment as I have."



VSA Tennessee is a nonprofit organization that works with individuals with disabilities through the arts and arts education. Use the following link to learn more about this organization:

<http://vsatn.org/>

For more information on Experiential Learning at MTSU, visit: <http://www.mtsu.edu/exl/>