



life



GIVING TREES

St. Louis-based Trees for Troops has shipped more than 260,000 Christmas trees to U.S. military families stationed around the world since 2005—a small token that brings tremendous joy to those who receive them.

This year, the charity has created a list of farms and tree lots where you can donate a tree while shopping for your own.

Or chip in financially at treesfortroops.org.



FOLLOW

@MINNESOTADUCK

Derek Johnson started an Instagram for his pet duck, Ben Afquack, as a joke. Some 90,000 followers later, Ben has become a local celebrity, regularly recognized in public. (With that fabulous waddle and air of content curiosity, who could miss him?) Whether he's snacking in the bath or exploring an ice castle, Ben's living his best life making people smile.



GIVE BACK

KNOCK ON WOOD

Scott Simpson, a skilled trades employer in Chicago, cofounded Revolution Workshop with a simple mindset: A hammer and nails can't solve every problem, but those basic tools can do a world of good. The nonprofit aims to reduce inequity by providing construction job training to people in marginalized communities, which in turn helps grow and diversify the city's pool of qualified workers. Since 2018, 185 people have completed the program, with 90 percent of graduates securing jobs locally. "Individuals who come to our training are from underserved, underinvested and disenfranchised communities that have truly been left behind," says Manny Rodriguez, executive director. "We provide these individuals with skills they'll have for a lifetime." (Holiday tip: Revolution Workshop sells wood furniture and products made by its graduates. Their cutting boards, plant stands and coasters support the cause and make great gifts.) revolutionworkshop.org

As part of our Good Neighbors program, highlighting unique Midwest nonprofits and individuals making our communities stronger, Midwest Living has donated \$500 to Revolution Workshop.