

Festival of Trees

Businesses light up charity event

BY VALERIE OLANDER
STAFF WRITER

Suburban businesses have pitched in again this year to make the Festival of Trees — a benefit to support the Children's Hospital of Michigan — a winter wonderland at Detroit's Cobo Center.

More than 100 brightly lit holiday trees of all shapes and sizes will be on display through Sunday.

Birmingham's Jacobsons, Troy's Scott Shuptrine, West Bloomfield's English Gardens, Bloomfield Township's Charlene and Company and Southfield-based Blue Cross-Blue Shield are just a few of the Oakland County businesses that are participating in the spirited event by sponsoring or decorating a tree.

Lisa Catullo and Andrew Pelletto from Scott Shuptrine's visual display department were on hand last week to set up a vignette entitled, "The Power, the Beauty and the Majestic." Between the marble walls and decorations of gold and silver, viewers will see a European holiday collection that includes the three

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Bill Palasty
design coordinator for Frank's Nursery and Crafts

wise men bearing gifts.

"This is a good charity. We're not really doing this for the public relations. We didn't want it to be commercialized. This is more for the benefit," said Pelletto.

"Mr. (Art) Van is really into Christmas. You know what he did for the Thanksgiving Day Parade. The family is very much into this. Besides, it's fun for us in visual display."

Furniture baron Art Van Elslander, also owner of several Scott Shuptrine stores, rescued the Detroit Thanksgiving Day Parade from financial difficulties almost a decade ago. If it wasn't for his support, the Woodward Avenue festivities would have ended a long Thanksgiving Day tradition for Detroit area residents.

Frank's Nursery and Crafts, with locations in Rochester, Bir-

mingham and Farmington, donated all of the trees for the festival, according to Bill Palasty, design coordinator for the stores.

The stores' display at the Festival of Trees includes a seven-foot tree decorated with candles, poinsettias, birds and dry flowers. Underneath are baskets of fruit and standing nearby is a jolly six-foot Santa Claus.

"We've been doing this for the last 10 years. Last year we were invited to do the trees for the Maury Povich Christmas Show. We'll probably do it again this year," Palasty said.

"We're with Christmas all year around so this is all second nature to us," Palasty said while decorating the tree last week.

For others though, setting up

for the Festival of Trees puts them in the holiday spirit.

It took 10 hours just to put the 3,000 white lights on one towering 10 foot tree — the Friendship Tree. Bloomfield Hills residents Jane Jacobelli and Susan Baker, both members of the Children's Hospital auxiliary board, stayed at Cobo Center until midnight Wednesday getting the tree ready for Saturday's opening.

Both women returned early the next morning to complete the job. There were 286 hand-blown crystal ornaments to be hung. The auxiliary began selling the ornaments, made by Pontiac artist George Bochnig, in September as a fund-raiser for the hospital. There also were large snowflakes and other decorations that needed to be hung on the tree.

Rob and Maria Schweers of Farmington Hills, also members of the hospital auxiliary, were helping to decorate the Friendship Tree, commenting on how it had put them in the holiday mood.

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