

It's getting to look . . .

Unless you're Scrooge, as the days tick away to Dec. 25, the Christmas spirit is getting stronger, right? Well, there's two spots — one close by and one a "lad" farther — that are dressed up for the holiday season. Capture the spirit of Christmas present on Page 6D.

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## Sparkling Christmas by design

By Charlene Mitchell  
special writer

The tradition of decorating the home at Christmas is taking on a new twist.

Jolly Santa in his sleigh along with Rudolph and the reindeer still set the mood, but many homeowners are beginning to design their indoor holiday decorations to blend with their decor, rather than the traditional red and green of Christmas.

In addition, more people than ever are buying artificial trees already elaborately decorated from specialty stores, or hiring a high-priced interior decorator to come into their homes to create a masterpiece of a tree for them.

Laura Bishop, 30, has decorated hundreds of trees and house over the last four years. Her company, Bishop Design and Display, started out doing mostly retail store windows, but has evolved into a whole new seasonal side business.

"People want something really great looking for their homes, but they don't know what to buy or how to arrange the decorations so they really look beautiful," the former Livonia resident said.

So that's where Bishop's apparent natural talents come in.

Bishop has never had any formal training in decorating, but has always had a good creative eye and an artsy-craftsy way of doing things, she said.

"It's just something I always liked doing and now I'm making a good living at it," she said.

WITH THE assistance of two or three helpers, depending on the size of the job, Bishop will decorate 25 to 30 residences during the holiday season. Some are easy; some are difficult.

Her most difficult job, she said, was at the Detroit home of Emmanuel Steward, manager of boxing champion Thomas Hearns.

"I rented a cherry picker to decorate a 35-foot tree in his yard," she said. "I tried to save money by not renting the boom to go with it. That made a four-hour job into a two-day job, so I ended up losing a lot of time and he got a great deal."

And that was her biggest mistake since going into business.

The time and work involved makes hiring a tree decorator like Bishop worth it, according to those who've spent anywhere from \$200 to \$1,000 with her company.

"I wouldn't do it myself ever again," said one Livonia woman whose husband was amazed at Bishop's skill at climbing trees and working with electrical equipment.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Sprigs of silver-painted dried flowers and fresh eucalyptus blend in with white lights and silver garland on a Christmas tree that took Laura Bishop six hours to decorate.

The sight of a petite and very attractive young woman in work boots and a hard hat, laying down electrical cable on a rooftop is unusual, but Bishop said she doesn't mind.

"It's fun, and I'm my own boss," she said. "Plus, when I finish a job, there's always a happy customer oohing and aahing and wanting to take a photo of me next to the beautiful tree."

Falling into this line of work was purely by accident, Bishop said. She worked in sales for 12 years, selling everything from jewelry and real estate to cars.

"I STARTED in decorating, helping a friend who did displays for a major jewelry chain," she said. "I learned a lot and turned it into something for myself."

One of the most unusual trees done by Bishop's company was for an athlete who wanted his tree to reflect his sport.

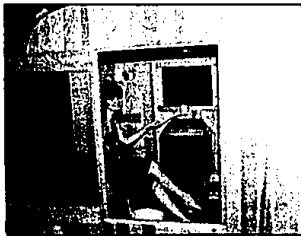
"We used banners, game tickets, trading cards and team logos, then blended it with color-coordinated bulbs and white lights," Bishop said. "It was gorgeous."

A local car dealer also hired Bishop to wrap all the cars in his showroom to resemble gigantic gift packages.

"The bows themselves took tons of ribbon, but he can use them again year after year, if they're stored properly," she said.

Decorating for anniversaries, birthdays, even pool parties, also is a part of her business, but Christmas, according to Bishop, is the time when she works the hardest and makes the most money.

Rebecca Thomas adds another ladle of water to the hot rocks in a sauna, available from Jamaican Spa and Pool in Livonia for a cool \$2,895.



ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

## In pursuit of the 'perfect' adult toy

By Carolyn DeMarco  
staff writer

The only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys.

OK, OK. That's not original, but only a few of the "toys" offered at last month's Adult Toy Show at Cobo Hall were.

If you're looking for something unique for the man-child on your list who never grew up, you'll want to at least take a look at the expensive

goodies. And figure on stretching the wallet along with your creative imagination.

But, hey, isn't he worth it? There's paintball equipment. Yes, paintball equipment, also called splatball. Two teams of men (and women) of possibly arrested development dress in Rambo-like fashion for a version of cowboys and Indians.

Two flags are set up as opposing teams try to penetrate the territory.

A carbon dioxide marking gun filled with water soluble paint pellets "eliminates" the enemy.

A ready-to-play package — pistol, goggles, 100 paint balls and carbon dioxide cylinders — costs \$140 from Direct Hit, 22100 Coolidge Rd., Suite 15, Oak Park. Call 544-8855.

Maybe you just want to try before you buy?

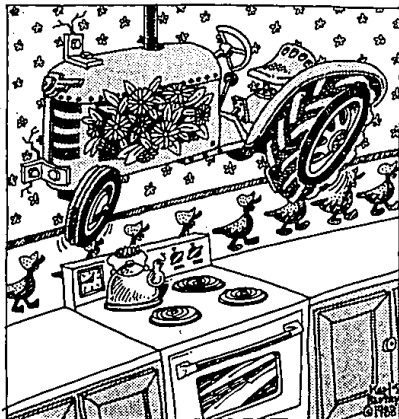
Splatball games are organized into Weekend Warriors outside events at Silver Lake and indoor

competition in Detroit near Livonia and Tireman. Air guns, paint pellets, carbon dioxide cartridges and goggles are supplied for \$17. Insurance is an extra \$3. Reservations are a must and camouflage clothing is suggested. Call Richard Boiger at 875-7549.

It's touted as an unbeatable solution for stress, a drugless alternative for pain and a powerful tool for per-

Please turn to Page A

# The Karlos Barney Holiday Gift Guide



What to get for the country-kitchen person who has everything: A full-size tractor-hat to hang over the stove.



What to get for the card-carrying A.C.L.U. member who has everything: A one-size-fits-all Nativty tarp.



What to get for the female body builder who has everything: A mustache cup.