

Great gifts
Marty Figley reviews
gardening books that
make great gifts.
B2

At Home

INTERIOR DESIGN ■ DIY ■ GARDENING

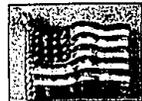
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J1 (M0-D1) Observer & Eccentric | Thursday, November 28, 2002

Accents

Store of Dreams

Holiday shoppers looking for gifts that have a special meaning will find lots of interesting items at the not-



for-profit Store of Dreams retail store at three area shopping centers.

All proceeds at each Store of Dreams will be donated to local participating charities.

The items include this handcrafted American flag tree ornament (\$20) designed by Bloomfield Hills artist Curtis J. Posuniak.

Among Posuniak's holiday collection are ornaments featuring the twin towers of the World Trade Center, firefighters holding a U.S. flag, Santa Claus and a snowman.

Conceptualized and coordinated by the Southfield-based real estate development and management firm Schastak Brothers & Co., the Store of Dreams project began Monday at Macomb Mall, Grafton Avenue and Masonic (13 1/2 Mile) in Roseville; Fountain Walk, I-96 and Novi Road in Novi; and Laurel Park Place, Six Mile and Newburgh (near I-275) in Livonia.

Each Store of Dreams, open during normal mall hours through Sunday, Dec. 22, features an assortment of merchandise ranging from handcrafted jewelry to books to clothing and more.

Merchandise was chosen and provided by each of the participating charities, which include The Children's Center, Michigan Humane Society, Michigan K.I.D.S., Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Michigan Department of Education in collaboration with the Livonia, Roseville and Novi school districts.

The charities also are responsible for providing staffing at each store, which will enable shoppers to learn first-hand about the organizations.

Up north

Summer may seem a distant memory. But the editors of *Traverse, Northern Michigan's Magazine* are offering a way to keep those beautiful up-north summers close by... It makes a good gift, the photos of northern Michigan that fill the pages of the magazine are now available on the Web, through a new art and photo gallery at www.traversemagazine.com

The Web site offers high-quality photographic prints on satin paper, as well as Giclee reproduction of original work from some of the region's most renowned artists.

Each print is numbered and signed by the artist and comes with a certificate of authenticity. The images are printed on the best-quality fine art paper or canvas using archival pigmented inks.

Prices for the photos and reproductions range from \$34.50 to \$415, plus shipping. The pieces are available in several sizes, with or without frames.



STACE CAMPBELL/OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Delbert McCrary stands among the evergreens on his 16-acre Christmas tree farm, Rattalee Lake Tree Farm in Independence Township. There, customers can do as little or as much of the work involved in harvesting and preparing a Christmas tree as they'd like.

Going for the green

Trip to Christmas tree farm is the old-fashioned way

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER

Everybody is short on time and patience during the holiday season... short enough that driving to the country to trudge through the woods and cut down the family Christmas tree sounds downright crazy.

But having a farm-fresh tree is quicker and easier than you might think. For one, you don't need to drive up North. There are several tree farms a short drive away in nearby communities.

Furthermore, you don't have

to do all the work. Most farms provide a variety of services, including cutting, tree shaking, baling and loading. Many provide carts for transporting the tree back to the car.

At Rattalee Lake Tree Farm in Independence Township, you can do as much or as little of the work as you'd like.

Workers there will cut, transport, shake, wrap, load and tie up your tree for the drive home. They'll even drill holes into your tree for a stand. And while you're waiting, you can warm up inside with a cup of coffee or hot cocoa.

"We do have customers that harvest their own trees," said Delbert McCrary, owner of the 16-acre farm of Scotch pine, Douglas fir, Colorado blue spruce and Norway spruce. "Most don't want to fool with it."

The amount of time needed to select and harvest a tree also depends on you.

If you're in a hurry, determine your desired tree species, height and shape before coming to the farm. Visit on a quiet day and rely on the farm's services to do the work. Before searching for a tree, ask for

guidance.

"If people are in a hurry, they can be out of here in 10 or 15 minutes," said McCrary. "If they have time to poke around and go in for a cup of coffee, they may be here a couple hours."

Whether you plan to spend a day on the farm - many people, especially families, do - or just a few minutes, don't forget to dress warm and wear comfortable boots.

Either way, a trip to the Christmas tree farm repeats in

PLEASE SEE TREES, J2

Designer brings North Pole vision to local Santa house

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER

Interior designer Kevin McManamon never imagined his job would earn him so many "cool dad" points with his kids.

His latest gig, an overhaul of Santa's house - the one in downtown Birmingham, anyway - has McManamon's two young children in awe of their father.

"They know I'm a decorator," McManamon said, describing the reaction back home. "And they were like 'You are God.'"

The residential designer agreed to take on the project and donate his services after a downtown retailer and client requested his assistance.

But the child in McManamon probably deserves the credit.

"You can't say no to Santa," he said.

It's no wonder McManamon began the project not in his Birmingham studio, but at home with a probe into the imaginations

of his two children, ages 3 and 6.

"What does Santa's house look like?" he recalls the inquiry. "What do you think you would have in there?"

"We came up with he's got to have a map so he knows where he's going. That he has a desk. And a computer and photographs of Mrs. Claus and the reindeer. And he has to have lists."

Lots of children's lists, overflowing from a cabinet, McManamon said, adding, "We'll have a naughty pile and a nice pile."

Ann Rosman, an interior designer and Birmingham resident who's assisting McManamon in the rejuvenation, recruited children to draw up many of the lists.

No detail was left unturned. There's a red telephone on Santa's desk - his Christmas hot line - and a plate of cookies with a glass of milk. Beside the fireplace and logs is a row of elves' boots. All the building materials, furnishings, accessories and labor were donated by local retailers and builders.

The exterior renovation, a fresh coat of white paint, ice blue trim and a gold door, transport visitors to Santa's "North Pole Field Office."

Inscribed on the building are Santa's hours and instructions for keeping Santa's workers in line: "Elves and reindeer, please wipe your feet (hooves)."

Another change out front are two wing-like structures that heighten the perceived size of the building and act as a backdrop for decorated evergreens.

"The concept of the exterior is very frosty and cold, very North Pole," said McManamon. "The interior is the exact opposite. It is red and green, warm and cozy and den-like."

Visits with Santa in his new field office in downtown Birmingham's Shain Park end Dec. 22. For hours or additional information, call the Birmingham Principal Shopping District at (248) 433-3550.

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Santa Claus' "North Pole Field Office" in downtown Birmingham was decorated by interior designer Kevin McManamon, who donated his services for the job for the jolly old elf.

JERRY ZOLYSEY/OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

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www.observerandeccentric.com