

Close

Dynamic View

Gearing up for the annual Festival of Trees

Visitors will enjoy walking through a wonderland.

By Linda Haase
Special to The Palm Beach Post

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas – at least at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, where the 1.7 acres is being transformed into a cornucopia of festively decorated live trees.

Welcome to the 9th Annual Festival of Trees, a winter wonderland of all things holiday. The holiday extravaganza, from Dec. 4 to 16, showcases more than 25 professionally decorated trees – tinsel, ornaments, garland and lights are just the beginning of these decked out beauties.

Each tree will be uniquely decorated by interior designers, artists and floral designers – and reflect this year's theme of The Joy of Holiday Traditions: Celebrating Family Heritage. Don't miss the light and music show illuminating two of Ann Norton's sculptures that will reflect into one of the gardens' ponds – along with musical interludes, dance and theatrical performances.

"This event has come to symbolize the start of the holiday season for our community," said Karen Steele, interim executive director for the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. "Whether you attend the Gala Evening, Children's Gala or come during the community days, we know that the Festival of Trees will awaken the sights, sounds, smells,



More than 25 professionally decorated trees will sparkle with tinsel, ornaments, garland and lights at the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. CONTRIBUTED

IF YOU GO

What: 9th Annual Festival of Trees

When: Dec. 4-16. The Gala Evening in the Gardens is 7 to 10 p.m. Dec. 4; the Children's Gala is 5 to 7 p.m. Dec. 13; and community days are 6 to 8:30 p.m. Dec. 5-12 and Dec. 14-16. The holiday house will be open daily through Dec. 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and during the Festival of Trees, also 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Where: Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, 2051 South Flagler Drive, West Palm Beach.

Cost: Gala Evening in the Gardens tickets are \$250 for non-members and \$175 for members; tickets to The Children's Gala are \$40 per person for both adults and children (children must be accompanied by an adult). Community Days tickets are \$15 for members and seniors; \$20 for nonmember adults and \$7 for children.

For more information: Email Festivaloftrees@ansg.org, call 561-832-5328 or visit www.ansg.org.

tastes and feel of the season. It is really a magical time."

Last year more than 5,000 people experienced the magic, she says – and even more are expected this year. "Every night we have multiple performers. We have an opportunity to give very talented performing

groups from public and private schools a chance to perform here. It adds a lot to the festivities."

The event is so popular it has been extended for three days this year, Steele said. Also new this year: Fare from EmKo will be available to buy during the community days. "In the past we've had things

like cookies and snacks but this year with food available people will be able to make it a longer evening," she said.

The Gala Evening in the Gardens will kick off the event at 7 p.m. Dec. 4 with music, dance and performances. Guests can stroll the gardens while sipping cocktails and sampling holiday fare from local restaurants.

The 13-day event will also include the Holiday House, which will be open Nov. 28 to Dec. 20 – making it easy and fun to multi-task. This is the place to find those unique holiday gifts – it will be packed with everything from Valerie Louthan cashmere sweaters, life-sized stuffed animals from Hansa Creation Inc., to antiques, decorative items and more.

The Children's Gala, from 5 to 7 p.m. Dec. 13 will feature music, kid-friendly events, snacks and performanc-



Sarah Benitz (left) and Regan Rupp are co-chairs of the 2015 Festival of Trees. CONTRIBUTED BY CAPEHART



The 2015 ANSG Festival of Trees Designers decorate "In the spirit of giving back." CONTRIBUTED BY CAPEHART

es including the Florida Dance Conservatory. The family-friendly event will be filled with lots of fun surprises, promises Steele.

The community days (Dec. 5-12 and Dec. 14-16) will offer guests a chance to wander around the elaborate displays. "Our trees, are professionally designed by interior and floral designers. They do this as a way to give back to community. It is all in the spirit of giving back, doing something very, very special for the whole community," explains Steele.

Jennifer Garrigues is one of those designers. She's also the design chair for event so she's

got her eyes on the whole picture, along with her tree, which will symbolize Rockefeller Center. "It will be a miniature version of the center," says the Palm Beach based interior designer.

This year's theme gives everyone a chance to express their own take on what represents their heritage. "It will show how others celebrate the holiday," she says. "I want people who see these trees to feel like it is Christmas, and be surprised and happy. I want them to feel like they have entered a fantasy, magical land.

"And I hope they get lots of ideas for their own trees."