

The Christmas Tree Chronicles

2025

*Celebrating 41 Years of
Continuous Generosity and Dedication*

Thank You, Theresa!

Greetings Festival Friends! Back in February, our executive director and friend, Theresa Diefenbach, retired from the Festival. We cannot thank Theresa and her family enough for all the support, time and dedication to our initiative and the kids at Children's Hospital.

To continue the great tradition of Festival of Trees (FOT), we introduce our new executive director, Kim Schneck. Kim worked with Theresa for the last couple of years and will be a fantastic leader. Please help us welcome Kim to the FOT team.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you at the Festival of Trees in November!

Scott Killingbeck
President



It's Summer ... *Think Christmas!*

Who thinks of Christmas festivities in the middle of summer? While most people are taking summer vacations, having barbecue parties in their backyards, or starting the dreaded back to school shopping, the team at Festival of Trees has been planning for months now!

Once again, our event will take place at the Ford Community & Performing Arts

Center in Dearborn, Michigan from November 22nd to November 30th. We hope you will join us in support of our mission to give kids more days to play and nights to dream. I am honored to take on the role of executive director and I know I have some very big shoes to fill. There are not enough words to express my gratitude to Theresa for showing me the ropes, dedicating so many years to make FOT what it is today, and always reminding me why we do what we do...*for the kids!*

Kim Schneck



A Benefit for the Children's Foundation

**For more information,
visit our website: www.fot.org**

*Inside
The CTC:*

**Meet Elizabeth –
A Designer Paying
it Forward**

**2025
Friendship
Ornament**

**FOT Week
Dates on the
Back Page**



Board of Directors

Scott Killingbeck

*President, Planning &
Friendship Ornaments*

Anina Bachrach

*Vice President &
Program Ads*

David Schneck

*Vice President &
Webmaster*

Jill Lezotte-Kates

Secretary & Avon Shop

Marty Polakowski

Tree Delivery

Cheryl McNamara

*Tree Designers, Gala
Auction & Raffle Prizes*

Jennifer Ribby

Volunteer Coordinator

Andrew Stein

*President & CEO
The Children's Foundation*

Kimberly Schneck

Executive Director

.....

NEW phone number:
734.280.7056

NEW mailing address:
Festival of Trees
PO Box 87175
Canton, Mi 48187

www.fot.org



OUR STORY . . .

Festival of Trees is an annual benefit for the Children's Foundation (formerly Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation). This special community event, coordinated through volunteer efforts and supported by our donors and sponsors, is dedicated to funding research into the causes and cures of childhood diseases. These philanthropic funds have been a crucial source of support for innovative pediatric research projects at the Children's Hospital of Michigan that have advanced the science and practice of pediatric health.

From our humble beginnings in 1985, Festival of Trees has grown into one of the largest fundraising benefits for the Children's Foundation, funding more than \$11.5 million in pediatric research through the Festival of Trees Evergreen Endowment. Investment income from the Endowment has been a crucial source of support for innovative pediatric research projects at the Children's Hospital of Michigan, providing seed funding that allows physician-scientists to research new strategies to improve the diagnosis and treatment of diseases and illnesses that affect children, leading to improved outcomes.

JOIN OUR FOT FAMILY . . .

We would like to invite you to become a part of the Festival of Trees family by supporting our 41st annual event. Your generosity will help ensure the success of Festival of Trees and generate a legacy of support for critical pediatric research initiatives.

A Designer - Paying It Forward

Elizabeth Martin has been a Festival of Trees designer for years. Elizabeth was celebrating a milestone birthday several years ago and decided to volunteer to give back to the community and to commemorate this birthday year. She chose Children's Hospital of Michigan's (CHM) Festival of Trees as her volunteer effort.

Elizabeth was born with a rare, unnamed genetic disorder, and was diagnosed with an intellectual and developmental disabilities. CHM was critical to her healthcare when she was younger and in early adulthood. CHM provided quality medical care and essential ancillary services including physical, speech, and occupational therapy. There were many CHM physicians and therapists that were instrumental in supporting Elizabeth



including: Dr. Michael Nigro, Dr. Jay Eastman, Dr. Burton Perry, Dr. James Gutai, Pat Nizio, Terry Ricket, and Gretchen Swanson. Elizabeth and her family truly value all that CHM provided her and wanted to give back, supporting CHM to help other children with disabilities and their families.

For the past several years, Elizabeth has been a Tree Designer for the annual CHM Festival of Trees event. She has designed trees with several themes including Children from Around the World, A Bear tree with Steiff Bears, A Santa themed tree, and an Outdoor Adventure themed tree. Elizabeth is a ceramic artist and intentionally creates ceramic ornaments to include in her tree designs. Some of Elizabeth's tree

designs have been recognized by the Festival of Trees and received an award.

Today, Elizabeth is an artist, small business owner – Elegant Designs by Elizabeth, community college student, and a contributing member of her community. CHM's early supports for her medical needs, the therapy to strengthen Elizabeth, her hard work and determination have led Elizabeth to today – a meaningful and purposeful life.



Find out more about this featured designer at www.fot.org/elizabeth-martin

Research Update



Funding from the **Festival of Trees** is the most important source of support for innovative pediatric research projects at the Children's Hospital of Michigan. This support is vitally important to advance the science and practice of pediatric health care. Many nationally known research programs at Children's have been initiated with research funds from the Festival of Trees. In 2025 we have funded several important new initiatives:

Barriers to Outpatient Follow-up After a Pediatric Emergency Department Visit in Inner City Children

This study investigates the barriers that impede families from seeking follow-up care for their children and adolescents following a mental or behavioral health visit to an urban emergency department. Dr. Kannikeswaran has made excellent progress so far, enrolling over 200 patients, and received a second year of funding to complete patient enrollment and follow up.

Graft vs. Host Study

This project aims to identify an early biomarker for Graft vs. Host Disease (GVHD) in children after a bone marrow transplant, improving care and treatment of potential complications. Following a bone marrow transplant, 30--70% of children are affected by GVHD.

Platelet Apoptosis in Thrombocytopenic Conditions

Thrombocytopenia (decreased numbers of blood platelets) is a very common condition seen in Hematology-Oncology. Patients with thrombocytopenia can have bleeding which may be life-threatening. This study aims to measure apoptosis (platelet cell death) in thrombocytopenic patients and further investigate the involved steps which may lead to new avenues of treatment.

Increasing Access to Pediatric Cancer Clinical Trials in Detroit

The role of a full time Clinical Research Associate (CRA) is essential to be able to offer state-of-the-art clinical trials to pediatric cancer patients. For children with cancer, the newest therapies and best outcomes are often only available by being enrolled in such a trial, but access is particularly difficult for ethnically diverse and economically at-risk populations. For 2025, oncologists are offering several new therapeutic protocols across a variety of disease groups in collaboration with St. Jude. This is only possible with appropriate funding to retain a well-qualified and experienced CRA to better serve pediatric, adolescent, and young adult patients pursuing innovative cancer treatments.

Children's Clinical Research Institute

Many physicians who choose to practice at Children's Hospital of Michigan (CHM) do so because they want the opportunity to conduct research to improve outcomes for sick children, and they know that new medical treatments and techniques require careful investigation and study. Young physician scientists routinely have difficulty finding the resources and support to conduct this research. Philanthropic dollars play an important role in scientific progress, supporting new areas of research neglected by federal dollars and providing essential infrastructure and support services that bring stability to research programs. Through partnerships with investigators at Children's Hospital of Michigan (CHM), University Pediatricians, and Central Michigan University (CMU), the Clinical Research Institute (CRI) meets a significant need for Michigan's children – cutting edge pediatric clinical and translational research.

Festival of Trees is proud to support all of these programs (and many more) through the hard work of our volunteers and the generosity of our donors. For more information on vital research funded by Festival of Trees, please visit our research page at <https://www.fot.org/about-us/research-funded-by-festival-of-trees>.

2025 Friendship Ornament

Become a Friend of Festival of Trees to benefit
Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation
by purchasing a hand-blown glass ornament.



All "Friends of Festival"
will be listed next to the
FRIENDSHIP TREE



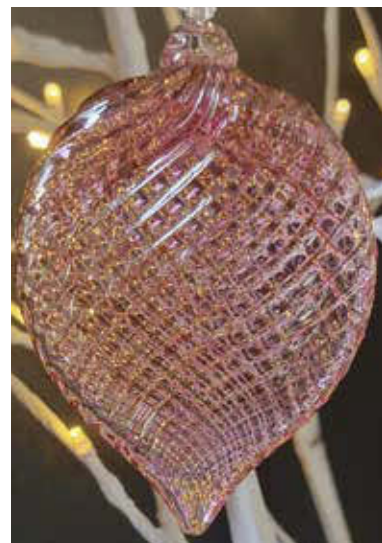
during the **Festival of Trees** at
Ford Community & Performing Arts Center
15801 Michigan Ave., Dearborn, MI
November 23-30, 2025

Your \$50 purchase provides revenue for the Children's Foundation,
through the Evergreen Endowment Fund. The Evergreen Endowment is dedicated to
funding research into the causes and cures of childhood diseases.

(Fair market value of the ornament is \$22 and the stand is \$7. Balance may be tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.)

For more information, visit **www.fot.org**, email
kimberly.schneck@fot.org or call **734-280-7056**

find us on facebook



Each limited edition
glass ornament is
hand-blown by
Marc Vandenberg
www.vandenbest.com

ORDER ONLINE
at **www.fot.org**

OR

USE THE ORDER FORM Festival of Trees Friendship Ornament
BELOW AND SEND TO: PO Box 87175, Canton, MI 48187

OR

CASH and CARRY
at the Event

MY INFORMATION

Name as it should be listed on signage (type or print clearly)

Purchaser's Name

Address

City/State/ZIP Code

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Email

Order Date

ORDER

MICS #12437

Number of Ornaments _____ @ \$50 each = _____

Number of Orn. Stands _____ @ \$15 each = _____

MI Sales Tax @ 6% _____

Shipping: \$10 per ornament _____

ORDER TOTAL _____

PAYMENT

CHECK: make payable to **Festival of Trees**

CREDIT CARD: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

☐ Discover ☐ American Express

Card Number _____

Exp. Date _____ Security Code _____

Name on Card _____

Address _____

Signature _____

DELIVERY

☐ I will pick up my Ornament(s) at the Event.

☐ Please ship Ornament(s) to my address (at left).

☐ Please ship Ornament(s) to honored recipient (lower left) and enclose a gift card from _____

Consider honoring a special person with this Unique Gift!

SPECIAL HONOREE

Name of Honoree

Address

City/State/ZIP Code



PO Box 87175
Canton, Michigan 48187

*Get
Hooked!*

SAVE THE DATE!

November 23rd – 30th

PREVIEW GALA:

Sat, November 22

VIP: 6:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
Patron: 7:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

HOLIDAY HEARTS:

Sun, November 23

11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
(Private Event)

FESTIVAL OPENS:

Sun, November 23

2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Mon, November 24

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
(Subject to extension due to
Dearborn Tree Lighting event)

Tue, November 25

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Wed, November 26

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Thu, November 27

Closed for Thanksgiving

Fri, November 28

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Sat, November 29

10:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Sun, November 30

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
(Raffle drawing at 3:30 p.m.)

For more information, visit
our website: www.fot.org

Current 2025 Sponsors



Convention &
Show Services

Meijer

Appletree Hill
Foundation

Jane Iacobelli

City of Dearborn