

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the First Lady

EMBARGOED UNTIL 9:00 AM ET

November 29, 2016

2016 White House Christmas – *The Gift of the Holidays*

This year's holiday theme, "The Gift of the Holidays," reflects on not only the joy of giving and receiving, but also the true gifts of life, such as service, friends and family, education, and good health, as we celebrate the holiday season.

Below are highlights from the full holiday décor at the White House:

Highlights:

- This year, 56 LEGO gingerbread houses—one for each state and territory—made from more than 200,000 LEGOS, will nestle in the branches of the trees throughout the State Dining Room.
- The White House Gingerbread House in the State Dining Room is an annual tradition. This year's gingerbread house will feature 150 pounds of gingerbread on the inside, 100 pounds of bread dough on the outside frame, 20 pounds of gum paste, 20 pounds of icing, and 20 pounds of sculpted sugar pieces. For the second year, it will feature both the East and West Wings.
- This year's White House Christmas Tree, on display in the Blue Room, is a 19 foot Douglas Fir donated by a tree farm in Pennsylvania, trimmed to fit into the Blue Room.
- The majority of the holiday décor was designed by Rafanelli Events and executed by 92 volunteers from across the country.
- Columns on the South Portico will be wrapped in lights this year.
- A new tree made entirely of hoses will be on display in the White House Kitchen Garden.
- Only 10 percent of the design used new products and materials. The remaining 90 percent uses repurposed ornaments and embellishments that were already a part of the White House holiday inventory.
- The First Lady will be introduced by Hazel Bethel from Cutler Bay, Fla.

East Visitor Entrance and East Wing Hallway

- Holiday Volunteer: Patrick Clayton (New York, NY)
- As guests enter the White House, they will be met with a literal interpretation of "a gift"—a giant present that serves as a backdrop for photos.
- More than 8,000 bows and ribbons will line the East Hallway, leading to larger than life replicas of Bo and Sunny—who have gotten into the presents—made of more than 25,000 yarn pom-poms.

East Colonnade

- Holiday Volunteer: Christine Framstad (Clifton, VA)
- Rounding the corner into the East Colonnade, guests can look up at the more than 7,500 strands of ribbon in a myriad of colors hanging with sparkling crystal ornaments.

Booksellers

- Holiday Volunteer: Xiomara Grant (Springfield, VA)
- Moving to Booksellers, guests will see a tribute to *The Gift of Service*, as we honor our military families through the First Lady and Dr. Biden’s Joining Forces initiative. A giant flag installation will feature images of the First Family with military members and Gold Stars hung on the military tree to honor the fallen. For the second year, a digital interface will be available for guests to send messages to our troops.

Lower Cross Hall/Ground Floor Corridor

- Holiday Volunteer: Julie Byrne (Washington, D.C.)
- The Lower Cross Hall will be turned into a winter wonderland, complete with “snowball” arches created from more than 6,000 ornaments, with countless snowmen lining the corridor.

Library

- Holiday Volunteer: Vicki Shapro (Seabeck, WA)
- *The Gift of Education* will be brought to life in The Library, highlighting the more than 2,700 books housed there. Rulers will rim the base of the holiday trees while crayons and pencils create additional standalone trees. The colorful ornaments on display will spell out the word “girls” in 12 different languages, paying homage to the First Lady’s Let Girls Learn initiative.

Vermeil Room

- Holiday Volunteer: Stacy Owens (Lexington, KY)
- Decorated with inspiration from the portraits lining the walls, the room will feature pastel-toned ornaments in “ballerina” pinks and pearl garlands adorning the trees.

China Room

- Holiday Volunteer: Isabel Rubio (Birmingham, AL)
- Commemorating previous presidencies, the room will feature 36 White House Historical Association ornaments.

Grand Foyer and Cross Hall

- Holiday Volunteer: Maurice Edwards (Hope Mills, NC)
- The Grand Foyer will serve as the setting for *The Gift of Reflection*. Next to stacked columns of shiny presents, mirrored ornaments will adorn the trees and garlands, reflecting the hope and gratitude in each visitor.

State Dining Room

- Holiday Volunteer: Diane Wright (Watertown, CT)
- The State Dining Room will celebrate *The Gift of Family and Friends*. Inspiration for the room’s décor comes from the feeling of warmth at the holidays—spending time with family and friends and celebrating together in our homes.

- Fifty-six LEGO gingerbread houses—one for each state and territory—made from more than 200,000 LEGOS, will nestle in the branches of the trees throughout the room. Each of the LEGO gingerbread houses are a one-of-a-kind creation and feature colors, architecture styles and whimsical details that pay tribute to each state or territory.
- On the mantle, a first-of-its-kind LEGO paper chain measuring approximately 18 feet long will hang alongside LEGO “gingerfriends”, built from 4,900 LEGO bricks.
- A team of seven LEGO Master Builders in the Enfield, Conn. offices of LEGO Systems spent a total of 500 hours designing and building the custom LEGO gingerbread decorations for the State Dining Room.
- Homemade holiday treats will also hang as ornaments and gumdrop wreaths will hang from the windows in the room.
- The White House Gingerbread House will also make its annual appearance, featuring 150 pounds of gingerbread on the inside, 100 pounds of bread dough on the outside frame, 20 pounds of gum paste, 20 pounds of icing, and 20 pounds of sculpted sugar pieces. For the second year, it will feature both the East and West Wings.

Green and Red Rooms

- Holiday Volunteer: Beverly Jensen (Seal Beach, CA)
- The First Lady’s *Let’s Move!* initiative inspired the design in the Green and Red Rooms, representing *The Gift of Good Health*. The rooms will feature fruits and pollinators, representing healthy eating. Wreaths made of lemons and garlands made of limes will line the walls of the Green Room. Oranges, apples, and pomegranates will mix with greens to create wreaths in the Red Room, along with gift boxes made out of cranberries.

Blue Room

- Holiday Volunteer: Patricia Ochan (Arlington, VA)
- Inside this oval room will be this year’s White House Christmas Tree—a 19 foot Douglas Fir donated by a tree farm in Pennsylvania, trimmed to fit into the Blue Room.
- Ornaments on the tree reflect the unity of our nation, donated by our fellow citizens across the country, as well as our military service members serving in the U.S. and overseas. The tree’s garland features a ribbon with the preamble to the U.S Constitution.

East Room

- Holiday Volunteer: Jacqueline James (Redlands, CA)
- The East Room will be the setting for traditional holiday décor, with red, gold and green ornaments, swooping garland, and golden Ferris wheels set atop the table and mantles.
- The centerpiece of the room is the annual tradition of The White House Crèche. The nativity scene, made of terra cotta and intricately carved wood, was fashioned in Naples, Italy in the eighteenth century. Donated to the White House in the 1960s, this piece has sat in the East Room for the holidays for more than 45 years, spanning nine administrations.