

DAISY AVENUE CHRISTMAS TREE LANE

VOLUNTEERS' GIFT OF TIME IS THE REAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT

At 7:30 am, Saturday, December 1, 2007, eight Wrigley Area Neighborhood Alliance (WANA) volunteers began preparations for the work day ahead. By 10 am, 17 additional volunteers joined to help with the set-up of the more than 31 large and 75 smaller Christmas displays for the 54th Annual Parade and Daisy Avenue Christmas Tree Lane event.

But, the real preparations for Christmas Tree Lane (CTL) began nine months ago when a small group of volunteers, who love the Holiday event and what it means to the neighborhood, worked two to three times a week to repair, renovate, and beautify the aging displays.

These volunteers, led by Maria Norvell, Vice-President of WANA and chair of Daisy Avenue CTL, drove two to three times a week to a 120-foot by 48-foot storage space donated by the Long Beach Fire Department. There the displays were masterfully built, rebuilt and restored - four of which were the originals first constructed in 1953.

- New Plexiglas windows were installed to replace those that were broken or cracked, some, like the Church, were stained;
- New, more secure bases were built.
- New water tower, "NOEL" letters, rail tracks and skating pond were constructed with care.
- Broken trim, roofs, and walls were replaced with new wood.
- Each piece was termite proofed to prevent decay.
- Roof caps were made for many of the displays so that rain would roll off the displays instead of dripping inside.
- Each piece was sanded and painted with exquisite detail and care.

Victoria Reynafarje confirmed that there were 17 snowmen in addition to the 31 building displays. "I know because I got to paint each one of them white. Other volunteers painted the faces and clothes. I love Daisy Lane and wanted to make sure that this neighborhood tradition continues to give joy for generations to come," she said.

Jim Trout, a long time CTL volunteer and Committee member, said, "I guess that Maria and I put in about 1,400 hours refurbishing and repairing the displays. We worked from 9-3 three-days-a-week since last March, and then there were all the other volunteers."

Maria agreed with Jim that the displays would never have been ready without help. "Our dedicated volunteers worked from 9:00 to 3:00 every weekend - putting in approximately 320 hours each since last March so we could be sure that the displays would be ready. We had two carpenters that helped us rebuild the displays - the Victorian House turned out great," said Maria.

The volunteers have different reasons for helping with CTL. Jim Sollenbarger said that he loved to paint. "My favorite piece was gilding the cross on the church so it glistens with gold. Even though I professionally design rooms for special audio/video equipment, including the one at Cape Canaveral that everyone sees on TV during liftoff, I had to go to the internet to find out how to do gilding, so I learned a lot, too."

For Jim Trout, it is a more personal reason. Jim and his daughter worked on CTL together for many years before she passed away five years ago, and in memory of her, he has planted a tree in the Lane. "Every year, my family and I personally decorate her tree."

Eighty-four year old Dolores Almendarez has been working on the lane since 1988. "My daughter Maria loves Christmas Tree Lane almost as much as I do. I've come here with my family since the late '50s, and we want to make sure it continues."

The 31 displays and other pieces are so large that assistance was needed to move them from the storage room to Christmas Tree Lane, which is located on Daisy Avenue's four block grassy median between Hill Street and Pacific Coast Highway in Wrigley.



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