



FESTIVAL OF TREES

★ Benefiting SLI ★

2024 Designer Handbook

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Welcome Designers

SLI is a non-profit organization celebrating over 50 years of service in Topeka. SLI was founded in 1971 to provide services for adults with intellectual disabilities. Twelve men and women occupied the first group home; today SLI provides residential, community integration/day services, health support services, and job training programs for 100 adults in the Topeka community. All funds raised from the Festival of Trees go to support the unfunded needs of these clients such as dental care, nursing, transportation, medical supplies, and more.

Festival of Trees will celebrate its 47th year in 2024. Each year the Festival attracts over 6,500 people. Beautifully decorated trees, wreaths, and other holiday items donated by local businesses, organizations, and individuals are on display throughout the event. Along with the display of your entry, there are many other activities for the whole family such as the Sweet Shoppe, a silent auction, Soiree, and more!

The information in this handbook will help you:

- Decorate your entry
- Determine the value of your entry & track your expenses for tax purposes
- Understand what to expect after you donate your entry
- Know the benefits you and your design team will receive for your donation
- Keep track of important dates and deadlines.

Note From the Elves

2024 marks my 10th year of volunteering with the SLI Festival of Trees! A decade of sparkle and holiday joy- wow! I'm honored and overjoyed to have gone on this journey with so many of you, and so grateful to those of you reading this handbook for the first time ever.

This year's note is remarkably short compared to past years because I can't stop focusing on the milestone. So that's my promise to you: we will make this year's Festival the MOST FESTIVE WE CAN! Let the celebration start with all the details in this handbook. Of course, not all questions can be addressed in a few pages, so please don't forget that Shannon and I are real people here to help you in real time.

Reach out at any time SLI Event Director Shannon Warta at (785) 233-2566 or swarta@slitopeka.org, or me, your Design Chair and Festival Elf, Jesyca Hope at (785) 554-0247 or jesyca@hotmail.com. Happy Designing!

Things to Think About Before You Buy a Tree

Types of Entries

Yes, we call it Festival of Trees, but we have THREE types of entries you can design and donate:

- Small or Tabletop Trees that are under 4'
- Large or Traditional Trees that are between 4' and 7.5'
- Wreaths

You may recall that 2023 featured many trees that were not trees – Paintings, Ladders, Quilts – we loved these ideas, and we're sure we'd love yours – but please contact the Design Chair to get approval for innovations.

What Makes an Entry

As a designer, you are responsible for every part of your entry. This means that you buy or create, and then donate to SLI the tree or wreath itself, any greenery, the lights, the stand, a skirt, a topper, and all ornaments. You can also include other holiday items like stockings, plant holders, toys, or anything festive you believe accents your design and adds value to the entry.

While we do not require you to buy retail items - upcycled or handcrafted items are welcome - please know that broken or repaired trees are not accepted. Likewise, trees with hooked branches or loose limbs are not allowed.

We encourage you to choose a theme with artistic creativity and imagination. A significant part of the success of this event is the broad appeal of the designs displayed.

Please note that the focus of your design should be on the tree or wreath, and that items underneath should be considered accents only. Also, "under the tree" isn't a metaphor. We really need accents to the tree to fit under your entry.

The Festival of Trees reserves the right to adjust or amend any entry as we deem necessary.

Things to Think About

Before You Buy an Ornament

Entry Theme Ideas

Children: Stuffed Animals (new/gently used), Toys, Storybook characters

Christmas in Different Climates: Tropical, Down Under, North Pole

Color Combos: All Red, Red & Green, Gold & White, All Silver

Cultural: Art Museum, Ballet, Circus, or Music

Elegant: Color, Fabric, or Style Focus, i.e. All Red or All Lace

Holiday: Nutcracker, Nativity, Snowman, Reindeer, Santa Claus

Miscellaneous: Gifts from the garden, Tree of Learning, Gourmet foods

Cultural: Christmas in Germany, France, Spain, or Asia

Nostalgia: Homemade, Old-fashioned Holiday, Children's memories

Outdoors: Camping, Lake, Lodge, Summer sports, Winter sports

Religious: Nativity, Angels, Silent Night

School Spirit: K-State, KU, Washburn

Seasonal: Winter Wonderland, Sunflower Spring

Sparkly Baubles: Beads, Crystals, Twinkle lights, Glitter

Sports: Basketball, Football, Baseball, Soccer

Vehicles: Trains, Planes, Boats, Motorcycles, Cars

Again, these are *ideas* for themes and notes for things that can go *on* your tree or wreath, not a design demand *or* a request that specific items be included under your entry.

Types of Buyers

Festival buyers are as diverse as your creations, but it is worth consideration as your entry is being bought as well as seen and enjoyed by Festival attendees.

Individual buyers are looking for trees, wreaths, or other items to decorate their own, or a family member's, home. They are often looking for more traditional designs.

Business buyers are looking for trees, wreaths, etc. that will enhance the business office, lobby, or showroom. Often, they are looking for trees with items or ornaments that can be given to key customers or employees.

Charitable buyers are looking for trees, wreaths, or other items to donate to their favorite nonprofit organization, school, or hospital. They want an entry that will appeal to the organization they are supporting. Entries can also be purchased and donated back to SLI to place in one of the 21 homes that our clients live in.

Things to Think About Before You Buy Your Next Ornament

Judging

Judging of entries for awards will take place on Monday, November 25. Ten total awards will be given out and will be chosen by SLI and Topeka community leaders.

Five to eight of the award winners will be included in the live auction during Festival Soiree on December 6 and all winning designers will be entered in a drawing for a Fairlawn Plaza gift card.

Below are the different areas that judges will be looking at, along with a description of those areas. Attention to these details your design will lead to a higher score!

First Impression: Does the entry make the judge say “WOW,” or “ooohh,” Or “aww”? A perfect 10 is an entry a judge instantly knows they’ll remember all season.

Quality & Craftmanship: Does everything look new, fresh, and in excellent condition? Did the designer do an excellent job of setting up, or attaching ornaments? A perfect 10 is an entry that looks like Martha Stewart keeps in her home.

Fullness: Has the designer utilized every available space to hold décor? A low-scoring tree is one where you could see the center pole. A high-scoring tree is one that clearly has every branch utilized. For non-traditional entries, this category is judging a sense of completion - does it look as "done" as it can be?

Consistency: From the topper to the skirt, tips to toes, does everything on the entry look intentional? Is the entry decorated in the same way from every angle?

Originality & Creativity: This category can be applied to the whole entry or a specific aspect. A perfect 10 includes a feature that makes a judge think, "Well, I never would have thought of that!"

Overall Visual Appeal: Different entries will appeal to different people, so this category will call on a judge to go with their gut. This is more like a last impression score once you've really looked it over.

Large Tree

Rules and Regulations

- All greenery and trees must be artificial.
- Trees with hooked branches or loose limbs are not allowed. Further, broken and repaired trees are not accepted.
- Real tree stands (stands with screws that go into the trunk) are not allowed.
- Lights are required. Strands must be new and securely wired to the trees. No battery packs are allowed.
- **Trees may be up to 7 1/2 feet tall, but no taller. This height needs to include the addition of any toppers or decoration.**
- Width is also an important consideration. Fully decorated trees must fit through doorways and residential hallways.
- The display area around the tree is a square area of 1 foot from the tree trunk. We asked that you **make sure** that the entirety of your entry, tree *and* accessories do not exceed 6' square *total*.
- All items under the trees are part of the tree purchase. Please do not place anything only "for effect." You will not get those items back.
- Your tree may be moved and potentially delivered by truck to the purchaser. For that reason, it is essential that **ALL decorations, lights, etc. are wired to the tree** with florist wire or pipe cleaners to prevent damage. Remember to use the same color wire as the color of your tree, i.e. green tree = green wire, white tree = white pipe cleaner.
- **No gluing of ornaments to the tree is allowed.**
- A tree skirt or other appropriate covering for the base of the tree must be included with the design.
- The trees are viewed from all sides. All sides of the tree require decorations.
- **For spacing, display, and/or auction value issues, the Festival of Trees reserves the right to adjust or amend any entry as we deem necessary.**



Small Tree

Rules and Regulations

- All greenery and trees must be artificial.
- Trees of this category should be **4 feet or under**. A display table will be provided. Ideally, all items for this type of entry could fit in a car.
- Please use the tree stand that comes with the tree.
- All lights must be new and securely wired to the trees, but unlike large trees, strings powered by batteries ARE allowed and encouraged.
- Your tree may be moved and potentially delivered by truck to the purchaser. For that reason, it is essential that **ALL decorations, lights, etc. are wired to the tree** with florist wire or pipe cleaners to prevent damage. Remember to use the same color wire as the color of your tree, i.e. green tree = green wire, white tree = white pipe cleaner.
- Ornament toppers must be glued together as well to prevent ornaments from falling off.
- **No gluing of ornaments to the tree is allowed.**
- A tree skirt or other appropriate covering for the base of the tree must be included with the design.
- The trees are viewed from all sides. All sides of the tree require decorations.
- Broken or repaired trees are not accepted.
- **For spacing, display, and/or auction value issues, the Festival of Trees reserves the right to adjust or amend any entry as we deem necessary.**



Wreath

Rules and Regulations

- All greenery and wreaths must be artificial.
- Wreath display stands will be provided.
- Please make sure all items included can fit in a car.
- Lights are required. Strands must be new and battery pack lights are recommended.
- Your wreath will be picked up and moved. For that reason, it is essential that **ALL decorations, lights, etc. are wired to the wreath** with florist wire or pipe cleaners to prevent damage. Remember to use the same color wire as the color of your wreath, i.e. green wreath = green wire, white wreath = white pipe cleaner.
- No gluing of ornaments to the wreath is allowed.
- Please no buying of commercially designed wreaths for submission.
- **For spacing, display, and/or auction value issues, the Festival of Trees reserves the right to adjust or amend any entry as we deem necessary.**



Entry Purchases

Make sure your entry is enjoyed by all

Delivery

All of your entries will eventually be moved to a new home. Trees that sell for over \$750 will be delivered to purchasers by FOT volunteers. All other entries will be picked up in the purchaser's own vehicle. Please keep this in mind while decorating; your forethought can help to ensure that your entry is as beautiful in a buyer's home as it is in the Festival Forrest.

Because of these factors, we ask you to refer to the entry rules and remember:

- Make sure all ornaments are attached properly
- Keep in mind the width of your tree as it will need to fit through doorways
- Keep in mind the weight of your tree with all elements on it to keep it from breaking
- Be mindful of the use of breakable items
- **Additionally, for transport accommodation, the Festival of Trees reserves the right to adjust or amend any entry as we deem necessary.**

Starting Bids

Festival of Trees will be doing starting bids in a tier system depending on your entry. We value and appreciate all your work on your entry and believe this process encourages bidding. Here are the starting bids for 2024:

- Wreaths - \$75
- Trees under 4ft - \$150
- Trees over 4ft - \$200

Please remember that SLI will also be setting "buy it now" prices for each entry. These prices may seem to be high to the average buyer but we do not want to limit the bidding the item could potentially bring

SLI has the right to adjust starting bids before or during the event.

Naughty List

Info to keep you off the list

Solicitations

Designers are allowed to receive donations to help with their entry, but designers are not allowed to ask businesses for a monetary donation. We also ask that you do not solicit independent media attention. This may interfere and conflict with work that SLI is doing beyond the Festival of Trees. If you have any questions or need clarification on this, please contact Shannon at swarta@slitopeka.org or (785) 233-2566.

Certificates

If you are giving a gift certificate or tickets to a performance, etc., please make a copy and place it on your tree; provide the original to Festival volunteers when you check in with your entry. Festival officials will keep the originals. All gift certificates, gift cards, event tickets, and other items being donated with the tree or wreath **MUST** be with the tree or wreath at the time of check-in. Any item that cannot be delivered with the tree or wreath on set-up day will not be included with the donation.

Jingle All the Way

The Wow Factor of Design

The “WOW” factor means exceeding the expectations of the attendees. Think BIG to create the most exciting and eye-catching entry possible! You might want to spend some time initially brainstorming ideas with your design team before deciding the theme for your design. The conversations leading up to your decision can be carried over to your design description. You can make the difference between a nice tree or wreath that will excite the imagination of the public and the buyers. The FOT Committee is available if you need ideas or suggestions to get you started.

Filling Empty Spaces

A variety of materials can be used to fill empty spaces and add shape to your entry. Suggestions include dried floral filler, floral and paper ribbon wraps and bows, raffia, tulle, pinecones, moss, holly, flowers, etc. Use your imagination! Buy more decorations than you think you will need, then buy even more!

Bows and ribbon garlands can be an economical and appealing finishing touch. When selecting ribbons, keep these things in mind:

- Florist satin wire ribbon is easier to tie than any other kind of ribbon. It comes in dozens of shades and patterns.
- Velvet is beautiful but because of thickness, it is more difficult to tie. If you plan to use velvet, you might want to find someone with experience tying bows.
- Ribbon comes in many widths. The wider the ribbon, the more yardage it takes to make a nice bow. It takes 2 to 4 yards to make a bow.
- Tie the center of your bow with a pliable wire, using a long enough piece that you can wire the bow directly onto the tree.

Jingle All the Way

The Wow Factor of Design

Lights

Many trees and wreaths are pre-lit, so you may choose to add more lights to give your tree or wreath added appeal. If you have a tree or wreath that is not pre-lit, all lights must be new and have at least two (2) strings of 100 traditional lights per foot of tree. (If using LED lights, the number of strings will vary.)

- Use lights that are independent of each other so that if one light burns out, the rest stay on.
- Do not plug more than three strands of lights together. If you are using more than 5 strands of lights—please wire a power strip to the base of your tree.
- Test the lights before putting them on your entry and again before adding decorations. Lights should remain on while attaching them to be sure none are loose or faulty.
- Lights should enhance the entry, not detract from them. Use strands of lights that have the same color wire as the color of your tree or wreath. Hide the wire so it cannot be seen.
- Colored lights. Depending on your theme, colored lights may enhance your design. However, sometimes white lights are the best to use.
- Lights must be securely fastened to your tree or wreath. Use the same color wire ties as the color of your tree or wreath. Two twists are sufficient to secure the lights and still make it possible for the lights to be removed later by the buyer.
- While we are not expressly banning them, the type of LED lights that burn a shade of white-blue clash with the lighting of Fairlawn Plaza and are not ideal for an entry.

The Nice List

Why Forms Are Important

So, you have read the rules and regulations for an entry. You have a theme; you even have notes for your description. Now it is time to fill out your forms. All of these forms are crucial to the Festival team to help plan, promote, and execute the event. Without all three of these forms completed, your entry will not be accepted for the event.

Description of Forms

Designer Application Form - Deadline: September 6

- The application form is for the determination of your entry into the Festival of Trees and provides your contact information.
- SLI will contact you if you have been accepted or not as a designer for the Festival of Trees. Limited spots are available.
- Please submit one application PER planned entry.

Designer Contract - Deadline: October 21

- The contract provides the title of entry and full description of your tree or wreath.
- The contract is complete when you submit your Title and Description and is not considered a complete contract without these essential items.

Designer Check-in Form - Deadline: November 22 or 23

- Includes cost and technical information.
- Hand-in at the check-in table at Fairlawn Plaza on set-up day.

Designer Tickets Form - Deadline: November 23

- One complimentary Festival Soiree ticket per entry. Additional tickets can be purchased if tickets are available.

All these forms can be found in the back of the handbook or filled out online at www.slitopeka.org/festival

Dashing Through the Snow

Important Dates Among the Way

Important 2024 Festival Dates

Designer Application Deadline – September 6

Designer Contract Deadline - October 21

Designer Soiree Ticket Deadline - November 23

Designer Set-Up Days - November 22 or 23

Festival of Trees – November 26 – December 7

Festival Soiree - December 6

Final Reminders

- All items under, around, and included with your entry should be moveable.
- All items with your display are considered part of your entry and will be sold.
- No commercial advertising is permitted.
- SLI has the right to adjust any entry as required once it is submitted on designer set-up day.

The Jingle Hop Has Begun

Setting Up Your Entry

Set-up Day

- 2024 Designer Set-Up Days are Friday, November 22 and Saturday, November 23 at Fairlawn Plaza. Entries for the Festival **will not** be accepted before those dates.
- Designer setup hours are 9:00 am - 6:00 pm on Friday and 9:00 am – 4:00 pm on Saturday.
- Any entry not delivered and completed by 4:00 pm on Saturday, November 23 will not be included in the Festival of Trees.
- Designers are responsible for the delivery of their entry and all accompanying items to Fairlawn Plaza.
- Upon arrival, check-in at the Fairlawn Plaza info booth with your completed Designer Check-In Form. You will be given your set-up location and any other information at that time.
- Please keep in mind that entries are being set-up in the center of an open mall so be mindful of your items and do not block walkways and entrances.

Designer Toolbox

Don't forget to bring these items with on set-up day!

- A blanket to place on the floor around your entry while decorating to prevent broken ornaments
- Extension cord
- First Aid Kit
- Floral wire or pipe cleaners to attach ornaments and lights
- Glue gun and glue sticks (for ornament toppers only)
- Ladder to reach the height of your tree
- Needle nose wire cutters, regular pliers, and scissors
- Tape - floral, masking, etc.
- Cart to help with moving items to your set-up location
- Chair or stool

TRACK YOUR EXPENSES

This will help both with your tax filing and with your check in form. This is for your records only.

Title of Entry: _____

TOTAL COST of Entry \$_____

GREENERY TOTAL \$_____

Tree \$_____ Greenery \$_____ Garlands \$_____

Wreath \$_____

DECORATION TOTAL \$_____

Ornaments \$_____ Picks \$_____ Garlands \$_____

Accessories \$_____ Topper \$_____

LIGHTS TOTAL \$_____

OTHERS TOTAL \$_____

Tree Skirt \$_____ Certificates \$_____

Items Under the Tree \$_____

DESIGNER APPLICATION

Completed form due by September 6, 2024. The form can also be filled out online at www.slitopeka.org/festival

Name of Company/Group/Individual:

Contact Name: _____

Contact Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

I am interested in designing the following item for the Festival of Trees (select one; please submit one application per entry):

Small Tree Large Tree Wreath

I understand that my entry must be delivered and set up at Fairlawn Plaza on November 22 or 23. No other date or time is available for set-up. (circle one)

Yes No

Planned Theme:

Return your application to:

SLI, Attn: Shannon Warta

3401 SW Harrison St.

Topeka, KS 66611

OR EMAIL TO: swarta@slitopeka.org

Because limited spots are available, SLI will contact you after receiving the application for notification of acceptance as a Festival of Trees designer. If you have questions, please call (785) 233-2566.

DESIGNER CONTRACT

Completed form due by October 21, 2024. The form can also be filled out online at www.slitopeka.org/festival

Name of Company/Group/Individual:

Contact Name:

Contact Mailing Address, City, St and Zip:

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Entry Item (*Please Submit One Contact Per Entry*)

_____ I/we agree to design and donate a **small tree** to the Festival of Trees per the Designer Handbook regulations. Tree Size: _____

_____ I/we agree to design and donate a **large tree** to the Festival of Trees per the Designer Handbook regulations. Tree Size: _____

_____ I/we agree to design and donate a **wreath** to the Festival of Trees per the Designer Handbook regulations.

Please choose a Set-Up Day (*circle one*):

Friday, November 22 (9:00 am – 6:00 pm)

Saturday, November 23 (9:00 am – 4:00 pm)

DESIGNER CONTRACT - *Page Two*

The description paragraph should be around 100 words (use a separate page if needed). Reminder - this description will be displayed in front of your entry. Festival of Trees organizers have the right to edit the description. Descriptions cannot promote any organization or cause.

Title of Entry: _____

Description: _____

Colors of entry: _____

Prominent decorative objects:

Location of light or power switches:

Design Accessories or Gifts:

DESIGNER CONTRACT - Page Three

- 1) I understand the Festival Event Director will assign a location for each designer's entry. Festival organizers have the right to establish and enforce quality control of designs to maintain a high standard of excellence. The Events Director and Design Chair have the right to refuse any donation that is deemed inappropriate, up to and including the set-up days of Festival of Trees 2024. Initial: _____
- 2) I understand that I am responsible for supplying all decorations and tools to design the entry. The entry and all the materials placed under or around my entry are a donation to the Festival of Trees. Festival organizers have the right to place the donated item in the live auction or silent auction during the event. Initial: _____
- 3) I have read the designer handbook and agree to the guidelines. I, the designer, will be responsible for the completion of my entry. If entries are not completely decorated by 4:00 pm on November 23, 2024, I understand that my entry may not be eligible for Festival display. Initial: _____
- 4) I will complete the Check-in Form and hand-in on set-up day. Initial: _____
- 5) I assume responsibility for the proper functioning of all lights and mechanics involved both during the Festival and upon delivery to the buyer. I can be reached at my provided cell phone during Festival if there is a problem with my entry. Initial: _____
- 6) I understand that SLI, Festival of Trees, and all other parties involved shall have no liability for any damage arising from any act of omission by a designer and will assume no risk for the designer's property and property used. Initial: _____
- 7) Any items included with my entry will be turned over to SLI on November 22 or 23. I understand late additions to the entry are NOT permitted. Initial: _____

Authorized Signature _____

Date _____

Please return all three pages of a completed and signed contract, one per entry, by October 21, 2024 to SLI, Attn: Shannon Warta, 3401 SW Harrison St., Topeka, KS 66611, or via e-mail at swarta@slitopeka.org.

DESIGNER CHECK-IN FORM

Please complete the following and bring it on set-up day.

Name of Company/Group/Individual:

Title of Entry:

Cost of tree, greenery, or wreath \$ _____

Cost of decorations, garland, ornaments, etc. \$ _____

Cost of lights \$ _____

Cost of items for under the tree or with wreath \$ _____

TOTAL COST of entry \$ _____

Location of any lights that are battery operated and need to be turned on manually:

List of items and gift certificates included or underneath with your entry:

Anything else we should know about your entry:

DESIGNER SOIREE TICKETS

Friday, December 6 at Fairlawn Plaza

Name of Company/Group/Individual

We will be using the free Festival Soiree ticket (circle one): Yes No

Name and email of person using ticket

Additional tickets can be purchased at www.slifestivaloftrees.com

You must RSVP by November 23 to receive free tickets!

Please return to SLI, Attn: Shannon Warta, 3401 SW Harrison St., Topeka, KS 66611, or via e-mail at swarta@slitopeka.org.