

# Tree festival becomes student art project



Katie Long shows students how to make snowflakes for Bijou's festival tree. Photos/Kathryn Reed

## By Kathryn Reed

Students gently take the special paper and fold it in triangles, then they make precise, delicate cuts like a surgeon.

What they create proves no two snowflakes are alike.

“Let it Snow” is the theme of the school trees being created for this year's Festival of Trees and Lights. Now in its sixth year, the festival is all about creating a winter wonderland.

Trees will fill Harrah's Lake Tahoe convention center Dec. 3-7. Some are elaborately decorated, others are traditional, some are over the top, others are whimsical. The school trees are generally smaller than the designer trees, but shine

through because of the creativity of youngsters.

“What’s fun is you get to fold and start cutting and it makes really cool designs,” Mia Koda told *Lake Tahoe News*.

She along with other students in Alana Cayabyab’s second-grade class at Bijou Community School is learning from Katie Long how to make the snowflakes. Long is a parent volunteer whose goal was to have about 600 snowflakes for Bijou’s tree. That would be one snowflake per student.

“Because of fire restrictions I ordered this special paper online so if the fire marshal tries to light it, it won’t,” Long told *Lake Tahoe News*.



Student Mia Koda shows off her snowflake.

The class is broken into groups, with Long working with a handful of students at a time. She explains how folding the paper into different triangles will result in a bigger or smaller snowflake. As the students finish their creations, she strings them together, creating a mini snowstorm effect.

And while it’s fun to decorate the trees, they are judged – so there are at least bragging rights to compete for among the

South Shore schools.

Crystal Wolverton was surprised at what her snowflake looked like. What she liked best is how the cutting makes different shapes.

Student Davis Castles is a veteran of the festival, having gone in the past to have his picture taken with Santa and to adopt a teddy bear.

The festival is designed to be an event for all ages to embrace the season without any religious overtones. Each year the festival, which is put on by the Barton Foundation, raises money for a specific cause. This year Barton Health's Hospice Programs & Services is the beneficiary.

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**Notes:**

- More info about the festival may be found online.
- The event is Dec. 3-7 at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.