

One-of-a-kind trees shine at Tahoe festival



Tantalizing Tango by Belen Urrutia is the overall winner at this year's festival of trees. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Imagination, creativity and artistry come together to capture the holiday spirit in mostly untraditional ways at the Barton Foundation's Festival of Tree and Lights. This is because these are no ordinary evergreens.

Eleven trees have either been ornately or whimsically transformed from a barren (fake) conifer into a one-of-a-kind Christmas wonder.



Jeri Oishi and the Enchanted Florist team won for creativity. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

Now in its seventh year, the festival is a showcase for designers to demonstrate their innovative ways to decorate a

tree. Schoolchildren get in the act as well – but with much smaller trees. Barton employees show their originality with decorative wreaths.

The five-day festival has a variety of events for all ages, from a hospital for teddy bears to a station for writing letters to Santa to a fancy adults-only gala.

This is the foundation's biggest fundraiser. All proceeds benefit the trauma center at Barton Memorial Hospital.

Untraditional is what captured the judge's attention. Best of show in the designer category went to Tantalizing Tango by Belen Urrutia. This also won for being the most elegant.



No Place Like Home by Cyndy Brown-Carlson is the winner of the best themed tree. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

The red and black-themed tree stands out in the room. It's not hard to envision a couple from Argentina doing the tango on the false dance floor surrounding the tree.

The creativity award went to Jeri Oishi and the Enchanted Florist team for Steampunk Christmas. An upside down tree is a definite rarity.

The best interpretation of the theme went to No Place Like Home by Cyndy Brown-Carlson. Hers was also one of the larger displays.

This take on the "Wizard of Oz" was replete with a bicycle and Toto, as well as ruby red slippers in a glass case.

Other winners were:



Most South Shore schools competed with classroom-made ornaments. Photo Copyright 2015 Carolyn E. Wright

In the schools category:

- Lake Tahoe Homeschoolers – best ornaments
- Sierra House Elementary School – best use of theme
- Lake Tahoe Homeschoolers – most creative.

Best Barton wreaths:

- I'm Dreaming of a Wine Christmas by Barton Laboratory Department.

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Notes:

- The festival runs through Dec. 6 at MontBleu in Stateline.
- The schedule and details are **online**.