

Creativity shines at Festival of Trees and Lights



Elegance oozes from the Winter Ice display. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Restraint was needed to not lick the supersized cupcakes and other sugary delicacies. After all, they were just decorations on a tree.

But these were no ordinary ornaments, so to speak. Gateau et Torta won the most creative, or out of the box tree at the Festival of Trees and Lights. (This reporter was one of the seven judges.)

This is one of 11 decorator trees on display at the four-day event at MontBleu casino that runs through Sunday. Barton Foundation puts on the extravaganza that is all things Christmas – with the trees being the highlight of the festival.

Lisa Shafer with Wildwood Makers Market designed the sweet tree.

A sprawling display that is more like a New Year's Eve party than a Christmas celebration won most elegant.

Katie Long from Thran's Flowers designed what she called Winter Ice. It has the only tree that rotates. All of the extras makes it hard to miss in the large convention center.



Woodland Queen took the overall honors at the 2016 Festival of Trees and Lights.

Woodland Queen earned best interpretation of theme as well as best of show. Jeri Oishi and the design team at Enchanted Florist created this masterpiece. It's so well done it's hard to know if this is more woman or more tree. It's almost like she could come alive, but not in a scary way like the trees in "Harry Potter" do. This queen seems regal, almost otherworldly.

Also being judged were the various trees – albeit much smaller in size – that were decorated by area schoolchildren. The

variety of class-crafted ornaments is stellar.



Ornaments crafted by children adorn the school trees.

Winners were:

- Most out of the box: Lake Tahoe Environmental Magnet School
- Best use of theme: Tahoe Valley Elementary School
- Handcrafted with care: Sierra House Elementary School.

All of the designer trees will be auctioned off at the Dec. 3 gala. Most come with an assortment of gifts as well. This is the eighth year for the festival. Every year a different beneficiary within the Barton Health system is chosen. This year the proceeds will go toward cancer wellness programs.



Festive wreaths are also part of the holiday decor.

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Notes:

- The festival runs through Dec. 4. For details on specific events at the festival and prices, go **online**.