

2013 White House Christmas – *Gather Around*

The theme for the White House Christmas 2013 is ***Gather Around***, a celebration of coming together with loved ones at this special time of year, and of the stories behind our beloved and classic American holiday traditions. In celebrating heartfelt memories from American families across the country and First Families throughout the years, ***Gather Around*** seeks to have us share our stories with one another and inspire us for the season and into the New Year.

Using thoughtful hand-made volunteer crafts and recycled classic pieces, the ***Gather Around*** decorations tell a story with each room and every tree in the White House. Special art displays and Christmas trees made from repurposed books help this year's theme come alive, and warm, traditional colors inspired by nature help unify the theme throughout the house.

This year's decorations also honor our military families, a tradition started by Mrs. Obama, whose Joining Forces initiative seeks to honor and support those who sacrifice so much for our freedom.

East Visitor Entrance

The East Visitor Entrance serves as a welcoming point for guests as they begin their tours of the White House. The walkway leading to the house features lanterns, the two trees that flank the East entrance are complete with gold pinecones and the garland around the entrance is accented by burgundy ribbons.

East Entrance Landing

The area between the entrance and the East Colonnade is dedicated to honoring our military members and their families. The landing features a tree dedicated to the memory of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and includes ornaments placed by Gold Star families, as well as ornaments representing all five branches of the military. Visitors are encouraged to write postcards thanking our service members serving abroad, and to pledge volunteer hours through Operation Honor Cards in order to give back during the holiday season and the New Year.

East Colonnade

The windows of the East Colonnade feature evergreen and stained glass wreaths, and at the end of the hallway is a handmade archway made from satin ribbon and chenille stems. Outside in the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden sits a Christmas tree wrapped in lights, perched atop a sleigh.

East Garden Room

The East Garden Room, commonly known as "Booksellers," showcases stacked books which morph into Christmas trees, and a special book display that spells out the message "Share Your Story." The east wall of the room features ribbon topiaries of the First Dogs – with a high-fiving Bo and a playful Sunny coming to life to delight the many children that will visit the White House this holiday season.

The Library

Accenting the many books in the Library is a Christmas tree styled with golden pinecones and burlap ribbon, decorated with poinsettia detail and a burgundy scroll design. A basket at the foot of the fireplace holds ornaments and glowing white lights.

Vermeil Room

This year, the Vermeil Room houses two Christmas trees, each adorned with wreath ring ornaments wrapped in satin yarn, and small door ornaments made by volunteers.

China Room

The eight-foot Christmas tree in the China Room is decorated with dangling crystal ornaments, red berries and fresh greenery. The table in the center of the room includes cylinder glass votive holders etched with the words “Gather Around.” Fresh greenery covers the mantelpiece, decorated with red, gold and silver ornaments matching the tree.

Grand Foyer and Cross Hall

The Grand Foyer and Cross Hall are decorated to celebrate both individual American families and our nation as a whole. The four large Christmas trees decorating the Grand Foyer and Cross Hall are adorned with snowflake ornaments and notes written by volunteers expressing their holiday wishes. Small wooden picture frame ornaments hold silhouettes of landmarks from around our nation including the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore and the Golden Gate Bridge.

State Dining Room

The State Dining Room features two 14 foot Christmas trees placed on either side of the mantelpiece, decorated with tin hearts, painted and decouped with the word “gratitude.” The State Dining Room is also home to the famous gingerbread house. Over the course of several weeks, members of the White House pastry team created a 300-pound, edible White House replica. This year’s creation features a mini Bo and Sunny sitting on the front steps of the house lit from within, and a functioning replica of the North Lawn fountain. This year, the gingerbread house rests on a life-size, custom-made hearth fashioned from Springerle Cookies. These sweet treats tell stories through images imprinted on their dough by hand-carved, wooden molds. Framing the opening of the hearth are sugar paste recreations of the tiles commissioned for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s fireplace. The edible fireplace reminds us of President Roosevelt’s famous “fireside chats” and will certainly evoke memories for so many of their own special moments gathered around a fireplace.

Red Room

For years, the Red Room has been home to the traditional White House cranberry tree. In keeping with this custom, a crimson and plum-colored flower and fruit vase—hand-made entirely of sugar paste—contains a one-of-a-kind arrangement of scarlet and fuchsia flowers and berries. The Red Room also features round stained glass wreaths hanging in the window bays above two 8 foot Christmas trees. Burlap cones filled with fresh greens and red berry accents decorate the Christmas trees, and gold painted nutcrackers accent the side tables of the room.

Blue Room

This oval room is home to the official White House Christmas Tree. This year’s tree, like many in years past, features decorations honoring our military families. More than 2,000 distinctive ornaments decorate the 18.5 foot Douglas fir from Lehighton, Pennsylvania. Children living on bases across the country created holiday greeting cards, many of which share their favorite holiday traditions. Other ornaments feature photographs of deployment homecomings, celebrating the joyous moment when families are reunited after long separations. These personalized decorations, along with round fabric ornaments featuring the silhouettes of each state and territory, hang from the tree’s branches. The tree also holds small globe ornaments, three-dimensional gold and silver paper-mache stars and ribbons hand-embroidered by volunteers with each state and territory.

Green Room

Flower ornaments, sugared fruits and lush foliage convey the beauty of nature in the Green Room. In each window bay, 21-inch round stained glass windows with floral motifs hang above an 8-foot Christmas tree. Round disc ornaments decorated with red poppies adorn the trees, along with orange and red felt flowers and faux sugared fruits. Thick fresh greenery along with ornaments decorate the mantelpiece.

East Room

The East Room celebrates the act of sharing stories through art, and features four Christmas trees decorated with upwards of 120 detailed, unique ornaments created by volunteers. Ornaments include decorated miniature cardboard houses, large hand crafted paper roses and glass bell jars filled with small decorative pieces, such as miniature picture frames of art. On the wall of the East Room sits the White House crèche. The crèche has been a part of the White House holiday décor since it was given by the Engelhard Family during the Johnson Administration in 1967. Originally from Naples, Italy, the Baroque-style set consists of 44 terra cotta and wood figures, some over 300 years old.

For additional information, including the 2013 Holiday Tour Book and instructions on crafts the military children will create today, go to WH.gov/Holidays. Holiday-related content from the White House will be tagged #WHHoliday.

Number of Holiday Volunteers by State:

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|---------------------------|---------------------|
| - Alabama: 1 | - Minnesota: 4 |
| - Alaska: 2 | - Nebraska: 1 |
| - Arizona: 1 | - Nevada: 1 |
| - California: 3 | - New Jersey: 1 |
| - Colorado: 1 | - New York: 2 |
| - Delaware: 1 | - North Carolina: 3 |
| - District of Columbia: 3 | - Ohio: 2 |
| - Florida: 1 | - Oklahoma: 2 |
| - Georgia: 5 | - Pennsylvania: 4 |
| - Hawaii: 1 | - Rhode Island: 1 |
| - Illinois: 6 | - South Carolina: 2 |
| - Indiana: 1 | - South Dakota: 1 |
| - Iowa: 3 | - Tennessee: 2 |
| - Kentucky: 1 | - Texas: 3 |
| - Maryland: 4 | - Virginia: 14 |
| - Massachusetts: 1 | - Washington: 3 |
| - Michigan: 1 | - Wisconsin: 1 |

16 volunteers have either served in the military or are part of a military family

TOTAL: 83

- ❖ The official White House Christmas Tree in the Blue Room stands **18 ½ feet high** and is nearly **11 feet wide**. It comes from Crystal Springs Tree Farm in Lehighton, PA.
- ❖ **24 Christmas trees** will be visible on the public tour route.
- ❖ **Over 450 repurposed books** were used as part of the holiday decorations this year. They will be donated to a local school's book drive following the holiday season.
- ❖ **Approximately 1,000 yards** of satin ribbon were used to make this year's replicas of the First Dogs Bo and Sunny.
- ❖ **Over 1,200 Springerle cookies** were used on the gingerbread fireplace in the State Dining Room.
- ❖ **Nearly 300 lbs.** of bread dough were used to make the completely edible White House replica in the State Dining Room.
- ❖ **Approximately 70,000 visitors** are expected to visit the White House during the 2013 holiday season.