



# Homes for the Holidays tour Nov. 16-18

## Decorators begin planning in summer for Hospice Care Ottawa's fundraising tour of local homes

**LOUISE RACHLIS**

Birgitte Alting-Mees gets together with friends every year to attend the Homes for the Holidays tour presented by Hospice Ottawa.

"It's a fall tradition," said the Centrepointe resident.

Now in its 16th year, the three-day tour of beautifully decorated houses is a fundraising event to benefit Hospice Care Ottawa, a community-based charitable organization that provides compassionate palliative and end-of-life care to nearly 1,500 people annually in Ottawa.

So last May, when Birgitte was asked if she'd like to put her own Bennington Street home on this year's tour, she didn't hesitate. "It really is a good cause; that almost goes without saying. I know that many people have benefited by the services provided by Hospice Care Ottawa."

This year's Homes for the Holidays runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, Nov. 16, 17, and 18. Guests purchase a ticket booklet granting them access to the homes and special holiday stops.

"(Ours is) a really comfortable house and we've been there more than 30 years," said Alting-Mees. "The house has grown a bit with us. We've done renovations to it, and it has been a very fun project for my husband and me and my family."

She is still planning to go on the tour with her friends — "but I'll have one fewer house to put on my route!"

Trillium Floral Designs will be decorating Alting-Mees's home with flowers, and using some of the homeowner's own Christmas decorations.

"The planning stage takes quite a few months of preparations," said Diane Boyd, owner of Trillium Floral Designs, whose daughter, Mandy Drew, works closely with her and is part of the design team.

"We typically meet with the homeowners in the summer, doing a quick walk-through and decide which rooms will be viewed during the tour of the home," Boyd said. "We then have our brainstorming phase, where we decide what colours and themes we will display in the house. From there, we come up with a more detailed plan of specific decor items we will use and how we can incorporate some of the homeowner's decor as well."

The florists begin to get inspiration as soon as they walk through the house. "We work with the colours already used in the home and build around any sentimental items or important pieces from the homeowners. With that vision in mind, we then sort through our many suppliers' catalogues to see what items will suit the home."

The installation actually begins at the shop a few weeks before the tour. All artificial arrangements can be made weeks ahead of time and the fresh arrangements are typically made a few days before the tour.

"We usually start decorating the house on Wednesday and finish on Thursday," Boyd said. "We also visit the house each day of the weekend to freshen up anything that needs it, and to water the fresh arrangements."

Trillium Floral Designs feels "thankful and privileged" to be one of the florists for the event. "We have enjoyed visiting the other houses, as well as meeting some very generous homeowners who are willing to put up with the commotion of decorators and people touring their homes!"

Five years ago, Jean-Pierre Soublière's home in the Rocky Point neighbourhood was one of the homes on the Homes for the Holidays tour. This year, he's the honorary chair of the event.



Built in 1988 and still home to the original owners, 15 Bennington St. in Centrepointe was expanded in 2011; this summer, the basement level was completely renovated, creating a grand family room as well as an apartment suitable for visitors or, if needed, a caregiver. **PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS**



Built in 1927 and named "The Wake Robin" after the red trillium, this three-storey home at 582 Mariposa Ave., nestled in the Old Village of Rockcliffe Park, incorporates historically correct cedar shakes, copper gutters, and accents throughout.

"I feel strongly that unless our community participates in our society, it won't be as wonderful as it is," said Soublière, who was formerly on the board of the Hospice at May Court and many other boards. "When you're involved in the hospice and end-of-life care you realize that you're also supporting caregivers and families. Our hospices need to raise 40 per cent of their budgets from the community every year, in spite of 1,000 volunteers who work there on a regular basis. It needs a lot of support."

On the weekend in question, Soublière plans to go to each of the homes on the tour to thank the volunteers.

**"Each home is really interesting. They are all different sizes, locations, and are of historic or architectural interest."**

Sharon Lalonde,  
Chair,  
Homes for the Holidays

This is Sharon Lalonde's third year as chair of Homes for the Holidays. A Realtor with Coldwell Banker Rhodes and Co., she was initially asked to help find houses for the tour.

"As I got involved, I found some people called and wanted their home on the tour because a family member had used the hospice. Some felt such strong bonds with hospice that after they moved, they wanted to put their home on the tour a second time."

Lalonde and her committee find the eight homes and put the event together with

florists and decorators, many of whom come back year after year to decorate the homes for the fundraiser.

"Each home is really interesting," she said. "They are all different sizes, locations, and are of historic or architectural interest."

About 1,600 people walk through the homes on the three-day tour across the city from Rockcliffe to Manotick, Westboro and Centrepoinette.

As the population ages, the demand for hospice increases, putting additional pressure on Hospice Care Ottawa to raise the \$2 million required annually to continue providing services at no charge to individuals or their loved ones.

The 2017 tour netted more than \$150,000 and organizers hope to surpass this in 2018. "This is the major fundraiser for Hospice Care in Ottawa," Lalonde said. "All of the funds raised by ticket sales, sponsors and holiday stops go directly to palliative and end-of-life programs and services that Hospice Care Ottawa provides at no charge to those living with life-limiting illness."

Included in the tour is the PopUp Shop at 291 Park Rd., the official residence of the Irish ambassador to Canada, in Rockcliffe Park. Not only will ticket holders get to see the inside the residence, but they will be able to shop from an assortment of gift items and specialty foods from local vendors.

Also included is access to the Holiday Bake-Off and Handmade Bazaar at the Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in Kanata. Guests can vote on their favourite edible creation and do some holiday shopping.

Tickets are \$50. To find out more about the tour and where to purchase tickets, go to [hospicecareottawa.ca](http://hospicecareottawa.ca).



For the Homes for the Holidays tour, a Holiday PopUp Shop and Coffee Stop will be located at 291 Park Rd. in Rockcliffe Park, official residence of the Irish ambassador. Ticket holders may visit as often as they like during the three-day tour event, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.



This stunning waterfront bungalow's recently renovated exterior, at 5801 Rideau Valley Drive, includes a 65-foot front porch extending into the front yard and creating a clear and inviting path to the front door.



Situated in Westboro Beach, at 269 Royal Ave., this contemporary family home with its light-filled open spaces, surrounded by mature trees, evokes a sense of serenity and timelessness.