



Contact: Ingrid Tighe,
Birmingham Shopping District
Ph: 248-530-1200
info@AllInBirmingham.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Birmingham Merchants Decorate the Town in a Unique Competition to Benefit Local Foster Children

BIRMINGHAM, MI, November 16, 2020 – This holiday season, the Birmingham Shopping District will host The Great Decorate, a holiday tree decorating competition in which restaurants and retail stores will partner with local artists to create spectacular holiday trees and compete to win a small business grant – all while raising awareness and funds for local foster teens. Each decorated tree represents one local foster teen selected in partnership with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE), a statewide information and referral service for families interested in adoption.

Every year approximately 26,500 teens ‘age-out’ of the foster care system – 1,700 in Michigan alone – and are forced to live independently with little to no resources. “When a foster child becomes of age and is not adopted, they are sent off on their own, often becoming homeless with no support or anything to their name. This is referred to as ‘aging-out’ of the system and it is devastating,” said The Great Decorate co-founder and foster parent Tara Fortney. Tara, along with Beth Hussey, co-owner of Hazel, Ravines and Downtown restaurant, founded The Great Decorate in 2019 as a team-building competition among the staff. The event gained so much attention and success that Tara and Beth are welcoming all downtown businesses to participate this year. “We are so excited to bring back this charitable effort in an even bigger way in 2020,” said Hussey. “We want to work together with our community to help those who really need it.”

As visitors come to shop, dine and stroll through downtown Birmingham from November 27 – December 24, they are encouraged to view the uniquely decorated trees on display at each venue and vote for their favorite by donating any amount in person or online at thegreatdecorate.com. All donations made through The Great Decorate non-profit are tax deductible and will be divided equally among each of the foster teens. As of today, participating merchants include: Hazel, Ravines & Downtown, fab'rik Birmingham, Harp's Lingerie, Urban Wick Candle Bar, Greenleaf Trust, Social Kitchen & Bar, 220 Merrill, Churchill's, Luxe Bar & Grill, Market North End, Gazelle Sports, St. Croix Shop, Salvatorre Scallopini, Sidecar Slider Bar, Streetside Seafood, Townhouse Bistro, The Morrie, Toast, Steele Angel, TENDER, Astrein's Creative Jewelry, Figo Salon, Birch Roots, Primi Piatti, Bridal Couture of Birmingham, Sorrentia's Salon, The Townsend Hotel, Adachi and Casa Pernoi. This list will continue to grow in the coming days as organizers anticipate over 40 participants and expect to raise about \$2,000 per teen to be distributed just in time for the holidays.

“The Great Decorate will make such an impact on the community this season as visitors are not only supporting local foster teens, but also local businesses for a chance to win a \$5,000 small business grant,” said Birmingham Shopping District Executive Director Ingrid Tighe. “This has been a trying year for everyone and The Great Decorate is a way for the community to come together and inspire hope this holiday season.” Merchants are excited to welcome visitors safely downtown for the holidays and are going above and beyond to provide a safe environment by encouraging social distancing, masks and following all COVID-19 protocols.

For more information, please visit thegreatdecorate.com. Due to the rapidly changing environment, we encourage everyone to regularly check the website for the latest updates on event information, voting and more.

For more information on holiday activities in downtown Birmingham, please visit AllinBirmingham.com/calendar.

Established in 1992, the BIRMINGHAM PRINCIPAL SHOPPING DISTRICT is comprised of nearly 300 retailers, including clothing retailers, restaurants, salons & spas, and antique shops. The district is also home to offices and a variety of businesses from financial services to technology-based firms. Located among some of the nation's most affluent suburbs, Downtown Birmingham is a center for business, social, cultural, and community activities for Birmingham residents and neighboring communities.

The Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) is a statewide information and referral service for families interested in adopting children from foster care, and for adoption workers looking for homes for these children. The MARE website provides a listing of waiting children in Michigan and of Michigan families interested in adopting children with special needs. For more information, visit mare.org

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