



THE BABY FOLD'S
FESTIVAL *of* **TREES**

Auction Item Donor Manual

Table of Contents:

• Welcome!	Page 2
• What is The Baby Fold’s Festival of Trees and Who Provides Support?	Page 2
• General Tips, Information, Policies, and Procedures for Auction Item Donors	Page 3
• 7-Foot Trees – What Donors Need to Know	Page 4
• 4-Foot Trees – What Donors Need to Know	Page 5
• Trees Shorter Than 4 Feet (Petite Pines) – What Donors Need to Know	Page 6
• Tree Decoration Chart	Page 6
• Wreaths and Swags – What Donors Need to Know	Page 6
• Centerpieces, Fall Décor, and Other Holiday Décor – What Donors Need to Know	Page 6
• Gingerbread Creations – What Donors Need to Know	Page 7
• Gift Baskets – What Donors Need to Know	Page 7
• Ribbons and Complimentary Tickets	Page 8
• Donating an item as a business? Please review our “No Advertising” policy	Page 8
• Photos of Items – Tips and Tricks	Page 8
• Important Dates and Information	Page 9

Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in participating as an Auction Item Donor for The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees! We are ecstatic to get to work with you and answer any questions you may have. This manual was created to explain the policies and procedures in place for the auction areas of the Festival of Trees. Should you have additional questions, please contact the Festival Coordinator, Jessica Shaw, at (309) 451-7205 or jshaw@thebabyfold.org.

Thank you!

What is The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees and Who Provides Support?

The Baby Fold is a multi-service non-profit agency serving children and families in Illinois. Founded as a faith-based orphanage in 1902, the agency now specializes in caring for young children and youth who have severe emotional and behavioral disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and children who are at-risk for a variety of reasons. The Baby Fold has 12 programs and services that can be wrapped around a child and their family as needed. Our services focus on improving the lives of children and families by building safe, loving, healthy environments through foster care, special needs adoption services, special education, and early intervention programs. The Baby Fold serves over 1,200 clients annually with 260+ employees working in 5 locations across Central Illinois.

This year, **The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees** celebrates its 30th year as Central Illinois' premiere family-centered community holiday event and fundraiser. The Festival is coordinated and directed by Baby Fold staff members in the Development and Public Relations Department as well as 50 Festival of Trees Committee volunteers who help bring the Festival to life. All proceeds from the Festival of Trees help to provide positive changes in the lives of children and families served by The Baby Fold.

The Festival of Trees is a multi-day event that includes a silent auction, a children's area, special events, cookie and coffee shops, and much more!

Our annual Festival of Trees sponsors provide both monetary and in-kind support and are largely responsible for helping The Baby Fold meet its Festival fundraising goals. Our silent auction, which includes gingerbread creations, Christmas trees, wreaths, centerpieces, gift baskets, and other holiday décor, also helps to raise significant funds for our children and families. Festival attendees (10,000+ annually) register to bid on hundreds of items featured in the silent auction.

The Baby Fold deeply appreciates our talented donors who provide the gorgeous items for our silent auction. Most of our Auction Item Donors are not professional crafters or decorators per se, however, our donors have many years of artistic, décor-crafting experience and are major supporters of The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees.

Throughout this manual, you will note that 2 main auction areas are described. They are defined as follows:

Enchanted Forest – this area is the main auction area that features over 500 items annually and includes 7-foot trees, 4-foot trees, trees shorter than 4 feet (Petite Pines), wreaths, centerpieces, other holiday décor, and one-of-a-kind gift baskets.

Gingerbread Village – this auction area includes all of the gingerbread houses and creations.

General Tips, Information, Policies, and Procedures for Auction Item Donors

- Our Auction Item Donors are community volunteers who want to support The Baby Fold by creating/decorating auction items for the silent auction to help raise funds for The Baby Fold.
- Keeping in mind that the Festival of Trees is a fundraiser for The Baby Fold, please consider the overall appeal of your item(s) when planning and buying supplies and décor. *All auction items should be decorated in a style that would enhance any home or business.*
- The Festival of Trees Committee volunteers and The Baby Fold will be the sole judges of item appropriateness. Only good quality, well-crafted holiday décor will be accepted. Auction items that are store-bought and not handcrafted by the registered Auction Item Donor will not be accepted.
- Once an auction item is delivered to the Festival of Trees venue by the Auction Item Donor, the item is considered a donation and becomes property of The Baby Fold.
- Please remember that your item(s) may be moved several times by our committee members to better suit the final auction area layout. Our committee members are highly skilled in aesthetics and layout structure.
- The Festival of Trees reserves the right to set item values and minimum bids. To help determine these values, please include a fair market value on your Auction Item Description form. If a value is not on the form, you will be asked for a value at check-in.

Please note that the Festival only accepts the following holiday-themed auction items:

- Gingerbread houses/creations
- 7-foot trees
- 4-foot tree (5 foot and 6 foot trees are strictly prohibited)
- Trees shorter than 4 feet (Petite Pines)
- Wreaths (all sizes – pre-lit and not lit)
- Swags (all sizes – pre-lit and not lit)
- Centerpieces
- Fall décor
- Holiday décor – stockings, mantelpieces, quilts, etc.
- Themed gift baskets (these items do not necessarily need to be holiday-themed, but there must be an obvious, cohesive theme for each basket)
- **7-foot trees (\$185 each) and 4-foot trees (\$75 each) may be purchased through The Baby Fold by the Auction Item Donor. The link to purchase trees will be sent to Auction Item Donors after they have submitted their Auction Item Donor Registration form. *Please do not purchase a 7-foot tree unless your 7-Foot Tree Donor Application has been accepted.***
- Use your imagination to add value to your items; however, we strongly suggest that you use décor and ornaments related to your item's theme for consistency, and to increase the overall

value of your item. When decorating a tree, our friends at Jeffrey Alans recommend 1 theme, 2 colors, and 3 textures/shapes.

- If you are a little overwhelmed as a first-time donor, focus on the colors you want to use instead of a theme.
- Unique items sell! We have found that our bidders tend to like items that are not always created in the typical “traditional” Christmas fashion; we encourage you to think outside of “red and green.”
 - We strongly suggest that you don’t use a theme that is so specific that only a few bidders would be interested in your item, such as a “Pixar Tree for Nurses.”
 - Auction items created around political or social issues are prohibited. The Baby Fold’s Festival of Trees only accepts holiday-themed auction items.
- Extra light strands added to 7-foot and 4-foot trees, spotlights, lit candles, and living materials are prohibited.
- Please refrain from decorating with décor and items that are battery operated unless you plan to be at Festival to turn them on and off each day and to switch out dead batteries. Volunteers and committee members are not responsible for making sure battery-operated items are turned on and off each day.
- Items/decorations/ornaments with a year printed on them are prohibited *unless they are collectible or highly valued*. Proper documentation must accompany the collectible item(s).
- Children’s toys from fast food restaurants and children’s new or used stuffed animals, including Beanie Babies, are strictly prohibited and may not be used as decorations or ornaments.
- Donors must bring their own tools and supplies on Decorating Day (the Tuesday before Festival opens to the public, November 14, 2023) including stepladders, glue guns, wire cutters, and other tools. *We suggest that you do as much prep work as possible before you arrive to decorate your item on-site.*
- Everything displayed with the auction item must be sold with the auction item. Please do not leave notes or instructions with your items that require the auction item winner to contact you for additional pieces or supplies. Items in the silent auction are “As Is Where Is.”
- Please leave your numbered inventory tag attached to your item at all times.
- To ensure the safety of gift certificates and other small items of value, please let the committee members know about them during check-in. The certificates/cards themselves will be securely stored elsewhere by The Baby Fold staff until the auction item winner picks up the piece. Copies of those certificates (or empty gift card envelopes) may be placed on/with your item.

7-Foot Trees

If you are considering purchasing and decorating a 7-foot tree, please keep in mind that it takes quite a large investment in the tree, ornaments, ribbon, garland, topper, and other décor to create a well-crafted, highly valued 7-foot tree. Our best 7-foot tree donors spend an average of \$200–\$500 each year on their trees, as it takes a lot of décor to fully cover the tree. Long-time Auction Item Donors are usually planning their 7-foot tree a year in advance since they get most of their décor on sale after Christmas each year.

- If you are interested in purchasing and decorating a 7-foot tree, please fill out the application, which can be found at www.festoftrees.org. The Enchanted Forest Committee will review all applications and reach out to the applicants within one week of the application submission date. Please note that The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees will **only** feature up to thirty 7-foot trees in the silent auction.
- 7-foot trees (\$185 each) and 4-foot trees (\$75 each) may be purchased through The Baby Fold by the Auction Item Donor. The link to purchase trees will be sent to Auction Item Donors after they have submitted their Auction Item Donor Registration form. ***Please do not purchase a 7-foot tree unless your 7-Foot Tree Donor Application has been accepted.***
- 7-foot trees will only be available to decorate on-site at the Festival of Trees venue on the Tuesday before we open to the public (November 14, 2023)
- Total height of a decorated 7-foot tree (including the topper) cannot exceed 8 feet; trees taller than 8 feet are at-risk for delivery damage.
- Extra strands of lights added to a pre-lit tree, spotlights, lit candles, and living materials are prohibited. Extra electrical items (such as lights) plugged into a tree can damage the light strands on the tree and/or blow breakers at the venue.
- Trees must be decorated to be viewed on all sides.
- 7-foot trees may be moved multiple times, including being loaded onto a delivery truck and unloaded at the winner's home/business. All ornaments must be wired securely to the tree. Ornaments with an inserted or slip-in hanging attachment must be glued where the two pieces meet so the hanger cannot slip out (a hot glue gun works well for this.)
- All trees must have a matching tree skirt provided by the Auction Item Donor.
- Please do not remove the tree bag from beneath the tree.
- Please note that your tree may get sponsored – that is an honor! This means that a sponsor of the Festival of Trees who gave \$5,000 or more chose to put their name on your item as part of their sponsor package. Your tree hasn't been sold to that sponsor, the sponsor chose to put their name on your item because they liked it best!

4-foot Trees

- 7-foot trees (\$185 each) and 4-foot trees (\$75 each) may be purchased through The Baby Fold by the Auction Item Donor. The link to purchase trees will be sent to Auction Item Donors after they have submitted their Auction Item Donor Registration form.
- 4-foot trees are available to decorate in advance or at the Festival venue. After the annual Jeffrey Alans Workshop in October, 4-foot tree donors have the option of taking their tree home to decorate (after they have purchased the tree through The Baby Fold) and bringing it to the Festival venue OR 4-foot trees can be decorated on-site at the Festival venue.
- Extra strands of lights added to a pre-lit tree, spotlights, lit candles, and living materials are prohibited. Extra electrical items (such as lights) plugged into a tree can damage the light strands on the tree and/or blow breakers at the venue.
- Trees must be decorated to be viewed on all sides.

- 4-foot trees may be moved multiple times, so all ornaments must be wired securely to the tree. Ornaments with an inserted or slip-in hanging attachment must be glued where the two pieces meet so the hanger cannot slip out (a hot glue gun works well for this.)
- All trees must have a matching tree skirt provided by the auction item donor.
- Please do not remove the tree bag from beneath the tree.
- Please note that your tree may get sponsored – that is an honor! This means that a sponsor of the Festival of Trees who gave \$3,000 or more chose to put their name on your item as part of their sponsor package. Your tree hasn't been sold to that sponsor, the sponsor chose to put their name on your item because they liked it best!

Trees Shorter than 4 feet (Petite Pines)

Trees shorter than 4 feet must have a matching tree skirt provided by the auction item donor (or a finished/decorative stand) and must be decorated to be viewed on all sides. All ornaments must be wired securely to the tree. Ornaments with an inserted or slip-in hanging attachment must be glued where the two pieces meet so the hanger cannot slip out (a hot glue gun works well for this.)

Donors can use any tree of their choosing in this category, as long as the overall piece is less than 4 feet tall.

Suggested Decoration Chart for Trees

TREE HEIGHT	NUMBER OF LIGHTS	NUMBER OF DECORATIONS	FEET OF GARLAND
2 feet	100–175	30–50	15 feet
3 feet	150–175	50–60	25 feet
4 feet	250–300	60–75	50 feet
7 feet	450–600	175–225	100 feet

Wreaths and Swags

- Donors must supply their own wreath/swag and décor/ornaments for the wreath/swag.
- Wreaths and swags may be lit or unlit.
- You will be asked to provide the diameter of your wreath (or length of your swag) when filling out your Auction Item Description form.
- Please attach a hanging loop to the back of your wreath or swag so our committee members know which direction to hang your item.

Centerpieces, Fall Décor, and Other Holiday Décor

- Donors must supply all of their own supplies and décor/ornaments for their centerpiece/holiday décor.
- Centerpieces and other décor may be lit or unlit

- Centerpieces should not exceed 5 separate pieces for one centerpiece; having multiple small items to make one centerpiece is a liability as loose and unsecured items tend to get lost or broken.
- You will be asked to provide the dimensions of your item when filling out your Auction Item Description form.

Gingerbread Creations

Gingerbread Village is one of the most loved areas of the Festival of Trees and features nearly 100 houses and other adorable structures each year. These intricate and charming auction items are also created by community members of all ages. The confectionary creations bring joy (and an inviting scent) to the Festival of Trees!

The Gingerbread Village committee hosts a workshop in September (invitation only) to teach their donors tips and tricks, including the recipe to make gingerbread that is the perfect consistency for building, as well as a recipe for icing that best helps adhere the walls and decorations together.

The Gingerbread Village committee recommends the following guidelines:

- We encourage the use of only edible materials, but allow the use of small, nonedible props—sometimes this helps the gingerbread creation sell.
- The base on which your gingerbread creation sits must be wooden or another type of sturdy base, such as a cake or seasonal plate (no cardboard), and should not exceed 24" by 24". Bigger is not always better; smaller houses and creations are more likely to have more bids because bidders don't always have room for the larger creations.
- Halloween-themed gingerbread creations are prohibited, but fall-themed creations are acceptable.
- Store-bought gingerbread house kits are allowed, but please do not use the plastic tray that comes with the kit. Be sure to use more edible items than just those provided in the kit.
- Please do not use hot glue to hold the walls and other parts of the structure together and please do not spray your creation with any varnishes or clear coat.

Gift Baskets

- Items donated in the Gift Baskets category should be just that—a gift basket. Collections or assorted items not in a single container (i.e., basket, decorative box, etc.) are not allowed.
- Each gift basket should have a specific theme and a cohesive collection of items that complement the theme. Below are a few theme ideas and basket content suggestions:
 - Spa Experience: gift certificate to a local day spa, soft slippers, scented candles
 - Gardening Basket: small gardening tools, gloves, flower pots, seed packets
 - Date Night: movie passes, gift card to a local restaurant, bottle of wine, wine glasses
 - Family Activity Basket: board games for all ages, pre-packaged nonperishable snacks and popcorn, craft supplies

- Christmas Baking Kit: cookie sheets, holiday-themed baking utensils, cookie cutters, recipe book
- All items included in the gift basket must be brand new and unopened.
- All items included in the gift basket must be placed inside of the basket/decorative box; items may not be attached to the sides of the basket/decorative box.
- Homemade and perishable food items, live plants/materials, and table settings submitted as a gift basket are prohibited.
- Gift baskets must be shrink-wrapped AFTER a photo of the basket has been submitted to the committee.

Ribbons and Complimentary Festival Tickets

Auction item donors who decorate a 7-foot tree will receive 6 general admission tickets, 3 tickets for a 4-foot tree, and 2 tickets for each tree under 4 feet, wreath, swag, centerpiece, fall décor item, gift basket, other holiday décor item, and gingerbread creation. We have a limit of 6 total complimentary tickets that can be received by each auction item donor or group. Every auction item designer will also receive a designer ribbon that will allow the individual unlimited general admission (for only that donor) for the duration of the Festival of Trees.

First, second, and third place ribbons will be awarded in the categories of 7-foot trees, 4-foot trees, trees under 4 feet, wreaths and swags, centerpieces, fall décor, and other holiday décor. For gingerbread creations, awards are given in several categories including, but not limited to, Best Use of Candy, People's Choice, and Chairman's Choice.

If you are donating as a business, please review our “No Advertising” policy:

The Festival of Trees is an important fundraiser for The Baby Fold, and the event raises essential funding for local kids. Please consider the overall appeal of your item(s) when planning and buying supplies and décor. All auction items should be decorated in a style that would enhance any home or business. Items customized to a business or niche audience tend to not sell well.

No company logos are to be incorporated into the decorations or overall design of your item(s). If your primary goal is to use The Baby Fold's Festival of Trees as a way to promote your business, organization, club, etc., consider becoming a sponsor instead of donating an auction item OR in addition to donating an item. Our sponsors pay to have their business name displayed prominently by the auction items. For more information, please contact Jessica Shaw at (309) 451-7205 or jshaw@thebabyfold.org.

Photos of Items – Tips and Tricks

With the integration of our new mobile bidding platform, we will need at least one photo of each auction item for our auction site. You may attach a photo of your item when you are filling out the Auction Item Description form. Here are some tips to make sure you get the best photo of your item(s):

- Lighting: make sure you have ample lighting to highlight the details of your item.
- Background: a plain, neutral background and surface on which you photograph your item is key.
- Angle: zoom in as close as you can to really capture the details of your item while making sure the entire item is in the picture.

Important Dates and Information

October 2023

- Festival of Trees tickets go on sale **Sunday, October 1**, and can only be purchased online until the Festival opens to the public on Thursday, November 16; tickets can then be purchased online and at the event.
- The deadline to submit your Auction Item Donor Registration Form and Auction Item Description Form(s) is **Tuesday, October 31**. The links to both forms will be inaccessible after October 31. Any donated items without registrations and completed descriptions after October 31 will be held for next year's Festival.

November 2023

- Item drop off and Decorating Day is **Tuesday, November 14 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Interstate Center**
 - 7-foot trees and 4-foot trees may be decorated on-site during this time; wreaths, swags, centerpieces, all "other décor" category items, gift baskets, Petite Pines, and decorated 4-foot trees must be dropped off on this day during this timeframe ONLY.
- Festival of Trees 2023 – Hours of Operation:
 - **Thursday, November 16** **4 to 8 p.m.**
 - **Friday, November 17** **9 a.m. to 8 p.m.**
 - **Saturday, November 18** **9 a.m. to 8 p.m.**
 - The silent auction ends at 8 p.m. on Saturday, November 18.