

# **#GivingTuesday Gives A Little Bit More With Announcement of Harlin's "Decorate A Tree For Charity" Competition Event & Holiday Display**

The year began in January with our first annual Quilting & Textile Show to ever open to a Youth Category. It was to be the first of many competitive art shows that year that would now include a competition category for youth, ages 17 & under. In February, the Gala Night for our annual High School Art Show and Young Artist Showcase packed more people into the gallery than we've ever had for a single event before. It was the start to what we expected would be a banner year for the Harlin, with a packed event calendar and so many, many plans....

And then in March, we were preparing to debut the entries to our Digital Art Show when the news about the coronavirus began to get serious. There had been reports in the news for weeks by then about the illness that had been attacking China, but that all seemed rather far away from our small town in Missouri. But quickly, within weeks, the highly contagious virus had spread all over the Asian continent and was already gaining ground across Europe. Americans abroad were urged to get back to the States as quickly as possible—if they could get back at all. Some countries were already employing travel bans and talking about lockdowns to contain the virus. And, while America was on alert, for many it was still business as usual....even though coronavirus cases had already begun being reported in New York.

This would be the beginning to a year that we will never forget....2020: The Year We Stayed Home.

Staying safe became the goal for everyone. Those that were not needed on the front lines to fight the pandemic stayed home. Those that could

not stay home—those unfortunately-deemed essential workers—bravely faced their new world with trepidation. Amidst the crisis, there was no one to come to the museum; not visitor, nor staff.

For five months, the museum remained closed while the coronavirus spread. What was once a problem that we only saw on the news eventually became a problem at our own front door. COVID came to Southern Missouri and the people around us, people we knew and loved, became sick and tested positive. Some suffered greatly, some lived to tell their tale—but ALL of us had to acclimate to what had become the new normal: wearing face masks, social distancing, grocery delivery, and celebrating our special moments with car parades and ZOOM calls where once there would have been birthday parties and trips to see Grandma in Florida. Months later, even after the mandatory quarantines were lifted and people tried to bring back some semblance of what we once considered “normal”.....nothing seemed normal anymore.

And, things at the museum were no longer normal either. Suddenly, all of the highly-anticipated events on our calendar were cancelled, one after the other. When Russ Cohran passed away in February, the museum had decided to feature a special memorial night to coincide with our planned gallery show on Russ’s locally-beloved creation, the West Plains Gazette—but it was not long before it was cancelled. We had also procured the talent of the well-known and exceedingly talented artist, John P. Lasater, for a gallery show and plein air workshop that so many of our local artists were eager to experience—it, also, was cancelled. By the time the museum was able to take its first tentative steps to reopening in Septemeber, we were so financially strained after months of no visitors and no financial income that we weren’t certain how we would ever be able to make it through the rest of the year.

But, as with so many other miracles this year, we managed to continue with the help of certain angels. In September, when we reopened with the largest portion of Broadfoot’s Pioneers on the Ozarks collection than we’ve ever been able to display, a generous local benefactor left a much-appreciated surprise in our donation box. In October, when we were struggling to find sponsors for awards, another long-time

benefactor stepped in to help cover costs. As always, the generous spirit of our community came to our rescue when we needed it the most. And now, we would like to return the favor.

#GivingTuesday began as an idea in 2011 that blossomed into a movement that promotes the idea of giving back. After the gluttonous consumption of Thanksgiving and the commercialization and consumerism of the post-Thanksgiving season that includes Black Friday and Cyber Monday, the United Nations Foundation, along with other partnerships, established #GivingTuesday as a reminder that the greatest gift of all is giving back.

This year, after so many hardships and challenges, we are happy to still be on our feet, with our doors open and our ability to serve our community intact. And while it will still take us awhile to recoup our losses, our work in fine arts education and historic preservation will continue. But many of our local nonprofits and charitable organizations cannot say the same.

While our community struggled to fight the coronavirus, many of our local charities used their resources to keep us afloat. They distributed food to people who couldn't feed their families. They provided resources like diapers and clothing to families that could no longer afford to buy their own. They kept so many of us going when we felt like we could no longer go on. And now their resources are so depleted that they themselves are facing the reality of no return.

So, on this #GivingTuesday, the Harlin Museum would like to invite the businesses and organizations of our local community to help us give back to our local charities in a very special way: by combining one of the most beautiful symbols of the season—the Christmas Tree—with the generous spirit of the season of giving in a unique holiday event.

Beginning today, we are accepting entries for our Decorate A Tree For Charity competition. Any local business, organization, or other entity can enter the competition to decorate a Christmas Tree in our Hathcock Gallery's Magical Holiday Forest and choose a local charitable organization or nonprofit for their tree to represent. To win the

competition, their tree must accumulate the largest amount in votes—and to vote, every person must make a monetary donation—one donation, one vote. Voters can cast their vote with a penny and voters can cast their vote with a much larger donation—its all up to them—but, when the total amount of donations is tallied, it's the amount in the donation box that will determine the winner of the 2020 Holiday Spirit Trophy!

We know that there are many in our community that are still struggling financially, which is why admission to the holiday forest display (and the opportunity to have your photo taken with **Santa Claus!!**) will be available to visitors for free. But every penny DOES count, and at the end of the competition, all of the “votes” accumulated will be donated to their respective charities and the participants in the competition will be featured on our social media and in the local press. It is our hope that many in our community will be inspired by the Christmas spirit (and the competitive spirit) to help us end this difficult year on a high note by joining in the fun and helping our community by competing to raise funds for those who strive to help us all.

**“Since you get more joy out of giving joy to others, you should put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give.” –Eleanor Roosevelt**

Rules & Guidelines for participants who wish to decorate a Christmas Tree can be found [HERE](#). Online entry forms can be completed [HERE](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page to find the form). Participants will need to schedule their gallery time to decorate their tree by contacting Vicki Warren-Martin by email at [v.martin@harlinmuseum.com](mailto:v.martin@harlinmuseum.com) or by phone at 870-706-7863. If you need assistance finding a charitable organization to represent, you may also contact Vicki at the email or phone number above.