

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

BY TIFFANY HORTON, HORTON DESIGN STUDIOS
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At the tip top of a very special Christmas tree at Jennifer and Darby Doan's sits a splendid little star; handcrafted by their oldest daughter during her time as a student at St. James Day School, the toilet paper core, painted green and crowned with a sparkly paper star, holds a special role as the official tree topper. Though they set up several trees each year, this one holds all the ornaments that their daughters, Katherine Anne and Johanna Claire, have made or collected over the years, and in the center, they tuck in a collection of Beanie Babies from when their girls were small. "The tree in the den is always real, and we always name it," Jennifer said with a laugh. "And there's Katherine Anne's star; it's a very sacred thing. If we didn't use the St. James star, we would be in trouble with the kids." Listening to Jennifer talk, you can tell just how important family is to them, and walking through their house you will see that it is full of unique pieces that tell the stories of the people and places they hold dear.

"Holly Ribbons was the Christmas china that we registered for when we got






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Jennifer lived in London during her third year of law school and Christmas crackers are a tradition there that she continues in her own home.

married," Jennifer reflected. "The sterling silverware is the same pattern as both my mother and grandmother. Actually, my aunt, sister, and cousin also have this pattern." In another area is an antique punch bowl complete with matching glasses, the same set that Jennifer's mother used throughout her childhood and each year during holiday parties, and she fills it with the exact eggnog punch recipe her mother also served. In addition to the china and the punch bowl, one of Jennifer's most prized Christmas decorations is the star that was used to top her grandmother's tree. But to keep it safe, instead of using it as a tree topper, it gets set out on display in different places each year.

Inside and out, the house is adorned with fresh greenery in the form of wreaths and garlands. You can find the greenery delicately draped along the staircase and artfully entwined inside the custom metal columns at its base. It also outlines the front door and swoops along the decorative second story railing as well as being tucked



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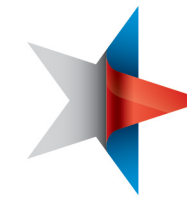


into the two topiaries in the front yard. The Doans enjoy the topiaries so much that, much like the den Christmas tree, they have also been named. The elephant has been appropriately dubbed Ellie while the giraffe is Billy Bob Joe Fred Henrietta, aka "Fred." As for the assortment of Christmas trees, they are a mixture of real and faux. "After we moved into this house, we had our first fake tree ever. It was very controversial. I thought the kids were going to divorce us, they were so mad," Jennifer said jokingly. "We've just always been a real tree family, but we needed something really tall. So the living room tree is fake, the tree in the den is always real, and then we have other places where we usually put a tree, and those are sometimes real and sometimes fake. Brent Stewart decorates for me each year [for Christmas], and I let him set those up however he wants."

A more recent tradition is that instead of filling stockings, Santa leaves a Christmas morning scavenger hunt. "We have four fireplaces, and they're all decorated with



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from Dr. Kyle Groom, DO; Cody Sanford, MSN,FNP-C; Kaitlyn Thomason, PA-C; and all the staff.

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stockings, so as the girls have gotten older, and they're asking for smaller, more expensive gifts instead of ten giant \$5 items, we decided that it would be more fun to have a scavenger hunt. They go throughout the house and the yard. Although it gets harder each year to be creative, it's still a lot of fun," Jennifer said.

While during Christmas, memories appear in the shape of seasonal keepsakes. Throughout the rest of the year, the Doan's house is full of other one-of-a-kind pieces they have collected. Each piece has a way of reflecting the people, places, and experiences that have been a meaningful part of their lives, and they enjoy opening their home up to their friends and the community. "If you knew Peggy and Jasper Howard, they had a beautiful house on McKnight Road, and they always treated you like it was your house. Everyone used it for everything; you didn't feel uncomfortable about calling or anything, and I wanted to be that house," Jennifer explained, "because it's not really ours. It's just temporary, and then you're gone. So, we've hosted Opportunities and Party with Picasso luncheons. We've had weddings and showers. I just love being able to have people here."

It is clear that the spirit of the season is alive in the Doan family all year long. Through their joyful hearts and giving spirits, their light shines on all the people and memories that truly make their house a home. ①

The Doans always send a tin of chocolate covered pecans from their firm in a Haltom and Doan tin, but then also send to their family and friends from themselves in a custom tin. They've let the girls make drawings for the tin. During COVID they added a little humor to the design; every year is different.



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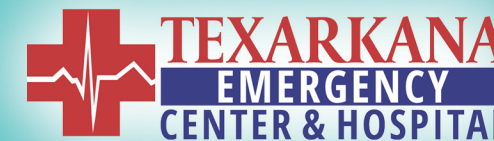


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