

First Annual Festival of Trees San Diego

by Big Mike Phillips

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Moe Girton, Mariam T and Bobby Gordon (photo by Kristofer Reynolds)

Event Website (and where tickets may be purchased): <https://festivaloftreesd.org>

Instagram: @festivaloftreesd

Facebook: /festivaloftreesd

Kick-off the Holidays by Being Creative; Raise Funds to Support 'Being Alive'

One of my favorite times of the year is the holidays. As a community, especially our LGBTQ+ community, we are always there to help make this time of year a little better for those who may have nothing. I love our annual blanket and jacket drives, Thanksgiving dinner, and toy drives just to name a few. Well, it is already happening with the hard work of my good friend Bobby Gordon. Bobby is a passionate member of our San Diego LGBTQ+ community with a long history of volunteering, serving on non-profit boards, fundraising, organizing, professional public speaking, hosting events, and working in marketing and communications. He currently works as a VJ (video-DJ) and hosts Big Gay Trivia at The Rail, Big Gay Sing Along (movie-musicals) in the theatre, and as a guest DJ/VJ at various other locations (e.g. The Hole in the Wall, Urban Mo's).



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Bobby met with me to discuss his idea and I love supporting people in our community who make a positive difference. This is how it works: As this will be the first annual Festival of Trees San Diego, they will be auctioning artificial holiday trees and delivering them to the winners' homes following the event! The event will also feature a robust Silent Auction and a Travel Raffle. The winner of the Travel Raffle will get a 6-8 night cruise out of the Port of L.A. in 2022. Bobby also has a few other holiday surprises for everyone who attends. The event committee is hosting this early in the season as the holiday kick-off event for Hillcrest and the LGBTQ+ San Diego community. Having this event early in the season let's winners get their trees, decorations, and other items from the Silent Auction as early gifts before they've even begun their holiday shopping, and having trees delivered to winners' homes great timing for them to kick off the holidays without having to lift a finger to set up their own tree! They have encouraged our trees sponsors (about 20 to date) to set up their trees the week prior to the event in their businesses or restaurants/bars to help promote their involvement. The committee will be photographing and taking videos as it gets closer to promote all our sponsors and their creativity in advance of the event, promoting on social media to involve the community before the event. Inside OUT was the natural and logical place to host, as they will display the trees the week leading up to the event, so potential bidders can get an idea of which trees they may want to take home with them. Tree themes will be shown and announced online the week of the event.

Bobby is so excited to be sharing time, ideas, and work with some amazing and talented members of our community. As he told me, "I've been lucky enough to pull together who I call "local heroes" to help make this event a reality in its first year." The event will be co-hosted by Moe Girton and the fabulous Miriam T. Their core committee members include Benny Cartwright, Jarrod Clever, Mark Schmidt, Joshua Simmons, and Joshua Yeagley. A huge thank-you to all of you for your time and hard work. Inside OUT is where the event will be held, Saturday, November 27, 3-7PM, and their manager, Paris and all of Mo's Universe have been so very generous in supporting this event! There are so many businesses that have generously become in-kind sponsors, but their major and core financial sponsors are: Coldwell Banker West Foundation (Travel Raffle underwriting sponsor); Copy Cove (underwriting printers); The Hole in the Wall; Jason Coleman Homes; and The Merrow. Attendees will find trees with very creative and unique themes from about 20 local businesses including most of Mo's Universe locations, Red Dress, Flick's, Uptown Tavern, PECS, The Hole in the Wall, Humanity! Sir & Son, Krav Dave Events, Number One, The Rail, Starbucks, Coleman Homes, and other local designers. Many local organizations have offered to help promote and volunteer, including Hillcrest's newest Kiwanis All-Inclusive Club and the Tom Homann LGBTQ+ Law Association.

The first annual Festival of Trees is a cocktail-and-mingle event with no assigned seating, featuring signature and holiday-themed cocktails, charcuterie-style hors d'oeuvres, and a unique soundtrack of remixed holiday music favorites provided by your very own DJ and event co-host, Bobby Gordon. All the expertly decorated and designed trees will be on display with signage explaining their titles,