

BY JAMIE SALEN

# THE GIVING SPIRIT: A NEW HOME FOR SANTA

It is a popular misconception that Christmas in South Florida lacks a certain “quality” that most consider synonymous with the holiday season.



THE NEW SANTA'S HOLIDAY COTTAGE

Crisp pine trees, snowy nights, and staged Christmas scenery that melts into the winter wonderland most of the Country experiences during those cold winter months. Many expect the holidays in the warm Florida climate to pass by without evoking that warm and cozy feeling brought on by the Christmas spirit, but in Delray Beach it is nearly impossible to

ignore the fastidious devotion to Christmas tradition. The Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative, Eagle Metal Products, Meisner Electric, the City of Delray Beach and a host of local volunteers, spend a month building the Tree and preparing the downtown for the holiday season. While the results of the long month of arduous labor come in the form of a 100

foot Christmas tree, faux ice skating rink, carousel, multiple houses from the North Pole, Santa arriving by Sky 12 helicopter, snow and so much more, it is actually the exercise itself that most authentically creates that warm and cozy holiday spirit.

#### CHRISTMAS AND THE COMMUNITY

The famed 100 ft Christmas

tree and the surrounding events seem to inspire feelings of pride throughout the community. While the economy has fluctuated significantly in recent years, one can't help but notice the presentation of the Delray Beach Christmas celebration has not. It has only grown. This is unequivocally due to the dedicated and engaged business community. Most of what

you see in Old School Square in the month of December has been donated in one way or another by the local businesses here in Delray Beach. “The community has really stepped up this year. It was time for a new house for Santa and Seaside Builders did not hesitate to make this a reality,” says Sarah Martin, Executive Director of the Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative.

#### SANTA'S HOLIDAY COTTAGE

One of the most important elements of a Delray Beach Christmas is Santa's house. Each year tens of thousands of children line up to enter Santa's humble abode with one eminent objective in mind; to spend a few moments looking Santa Claus in the eye, and reminding him of what they wish for this year. One might argue, the carefully constructed and placed cottage in Old School Square carries the true Christmas spirit to the children, while the 100 ft stunner of a tree sets the backdrop for an authentic experience. After years of good use, the Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative dreamed of retiring Santa's house and replacing it with a newer model. As a non-profit partner of the City of Delray Beach, the DBMC maintains a strict budget for the holidays to ensure the community's expectations are met each year. “While a new house for Santa was not a top priority for us in terms of budget, we wanted to make this year as



DURING THE CONSTRUCTION

special as we could for Delray Beach. This year is the Centennial, and we just couldn't let Santa down,” explained Martin. Thanks to the generosity of Seaside Builders, that dream has now come true. Santa no longer has a house, but a spectacular luxury home. While Seaside Builders provided the labor, materials and expertise to complete this project in only two weeks, Richard Jones and staff of Richard Jones Architecture, Inc. donated their time to design, draw plans, and create renderings for the new cottage.

Richard Jones, who in addition donated the lighting and hardware also stopped by the cottage while it was under construction to make sure every detail was perfect. “We very much wanted to create something special in celebration of the holidays and the city's 100th anniversary,” said Richard Jones. “When we envisioned the design for the cottage we incorporated an eclectic mix of old Delray style, coastal detailing, and childhood dreams. We hope it becomes a memorable experience for all who enter and feel the magic of the

holiday season,” he adds.

Some of the features in Santa's new “home away from home” include two separate doors, one for entrance and one for exit. This feature was added to allow for faster service within the house. Children will no longer be shuffled in and out of the same door, which will help to create a better flow through the line. The design also includes a special space for the photographer. This feature will help the photographer to get the best shot possible of the children on Santa's knee. Tom Laudani and Patrick Whyte of Seaside Builders expressed their excitement in being a part of history. “We are builders, and as such what we create stands for a long time for public view, but having the honor of creating such an important element in the Delray Beach Christmas tradition has been very satisfying. Having involvement in the joyful memories of so many children is just amazing,” says Tom Laudani of Seaside Builders. The Seaside Builders team has been diligently working to complete construction and the new Cottage arrived on site at Old School Square on November 15th and thanks to the contribution by Seaside Builders, on December 1st the first round of children will visit Santa for the very first time in his new home. A home that is built to last. “We take great pride in Delray” says Laudani. “We hope families will enjoy Santa's home for years and years to come”.



OLD SANTA HOUSE



SEASIDE BUILDERS



RICHARD JONES



ARCHITECTURE