

Tree festival sparks Flame Run's interest

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Flame Run Gallery owners Brook White and Susie Slabaugh White with twins Chrisler and Aubrey. (By David Harpe, Special to The C-J)

This weekend's Festival of Trees and Lights is special to Brook Forrest White Jr. and his wife, Susie Slabaugh White, owners of the Flame Run contemporary art glass studio. That's because it benefits the neonatal intensive care unit at Kosair Children's Hospital.

The Whites' twins, Chrisler and Aubrey, were born two months premature last year and had to spend their first month in the NICU at Norton Suburban Hospital. The twins will celebrate their first birthday on Nov. 27.

When Lynda Payne from Main Street Realty approached the couple about co-sponsoring a tree for the festival to benefit a neonatal unit, it was an easy decision.

"We just kind of smiled and said of course we'll do it," Brook White said.

They have decked out a nearly 7-foot-tall tree with 90 blown-glass ornaments they created in a rainbow of colors, dubbing it "Great Balls of Fire." The name refers to the fact that the hand-blown ornaments begin from a 2,000-degree orb of molten glass.

Their tree and more than 300 others will be on display and on sale today through Sunday at Louisville Slugger Field.

Visitors will see "lots of vibrant colors -- pinks and purples and golds," said Lisa Brosky, festival chairman.

Other trees on display include Kroger Floral Design's cowboy creation, which has been named "Boot Scootin' Christmas Tree," and four trees decked out by the American Woodturners with hand-turned wooden ornaments. There are also several Curious George-themed trees and a Christmas palm tree.

Besides trees, there will also be more than 200 wreaths for sale. Prices begin at around \$35 for a wreath and go up to \$750 for an elaborate tree.

There will be a gift shop and a sweet shop. Celebrations of Kwanzaa, Judaic customs and Christian heritage also will be featured.

"I don't think you could come to the festival and not leave feeling full of the holiday spirit," Brosky said. "It's bright, it's lively, it's beautiful."

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