

# JTTF Christmas Tree Tour keeps legacy alive

Remarkable tradition continues in memory of founder JT Townsend.

## Liltera R. Williams

Special to The Recorder

Now in its third year, the JT Townsend Foundation Christmas Tree Tour continues, and it's bigger and brighter.

In the Masulli household, the reason for the season is always clear — simply believing. For the past 17 years, the enthusiastic couple has collected ornaments to adorn the mini to large-sized trees that are placed on display throughout their Ponte Vedra home to contribute to a worthy cause. After relocating from New Jersey in 1995, the Masullis started a tradition that would soon become a meaningful and beneficial ritual of getting others in the spirit of giving back. That was ultimately JT's mission, the founder and orchestrator of JTTF. After he suddenly passed away in June, the overall consensus was that his work must continue.

And so far, it has.

The most remarkable quality about JT, other than his humbleness, was his contagious smile. I can vividly recall last year's tour when he arrived to greet me. As he was ushered from his wheelchair-accessible van into the Masulli home, he followed us from the 4' Wisconsin Balsam tree in the kitchen past the "JT tree" that rested atop the piano downstairs. During the brief pause, noticing but not acknowledging my obvious fascination, he turned to me and said, "Isn't this house amazing?" The Masulli home is beyond amazing. Taking up 9,500 square feet of space in the Harbour Island Marsh Landing subdivision, it's truly an exquisite sight.

In preparation for the 2013 tour, decorating began the second week in October and took about three weeks to complete. Forty new ornaments have been added to the Patricia Breen collection, with a number of them done in gold to further complement the traditional red and green Christmas colors. Three of those designs are highlighted inside of living room candle holders.

A new limited edition JT Gives Back ornament was also created and is only available in 200 numbered pieces. Hand blown and hand painted by Mia in her studio in Krakow, Poland, the ornament depicts a 6 ½" Santa with a traditional red coat and white glitter poinsettias. "Live Like JT 1987-2013" is displayed on the bottom.

"JT personally selected this mold and coloration and of the three we had done, this was his favorite. After he (passed away), we asked the



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A limited edition Christmas ornament was created this year to honor founder JT Townsend. Only 100 pieces were produced with this color combination, featuring JT's favorite color.

designer to produce 100 pieces of a commemorative version. It's the same mold, painted in full purple glitter. Purple was JT's favorite color," said the Masullis.

The evening and daytime tours, ornament sales and the sale of items in the JT Christmas Shoppes, continues to be the largest fundraising activity for the JT Townsend Foundation, providing a significant percentage of

the funding that has been raised to assist those with disabilities. To date, the foundation has helped 89 families with \$191,000 in adaptive equipment, financial assistance and spinal cord injury research.

The 2013 Christmas tour setup is the same as last year's and the inaugural year. However, the event will be held on a Saturday instead of a weekday, December 7th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00

p.m., at the Masulli residence: 121 Bristol Place, in hopes of attracting more visitors. Tickets for the tree tour are \$25 and can be purchased via the official JTTF website [www.jttownsend-foundation.org](http://www.jttownsend-foundation.org). The signature ornaments and unique single and double door swags can be purchased online as well. For those who are unable to



Photos by **Liliteria R. Williams**/Special to The Recorder

Special edition ornaments can be purchased online this year at [www.jttownsendfoundation.org](http://www.jttownsendfoundation.org).

## JT Townsend

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attend to see the 27 differently themed Christmas Trees decorated with 2,500 hand blown, hand painted Holiday ornaments from Europe in person, donations are accepted year-round.

The Masullis, along with JTTF Board Chair, Judi Zitiello, and JT's family are determined not to let his efforts while living be forgotten. It is often said that JT accomplished more in 26 years than most people do in a lifetime. As quoted on the JTTF magnet that sticks to my fridge, "You have to have a strong mind, believe in God, keep the faith and live every day like it's your last." Indeed, JT's legacy will surely prevail as we all strive to live the way that he did by selflessly giving back, even after the holidays. Please support this year's JTTF Christmas Tree Tour in honor of his memory.

Send us your news!

Email [kelly@opcfla.com](mailto:kelly@opcfla.com).



The JT Gives Back ornament this year depicts Santa in a traditional red coat and is only available in 200 numbered pieces.

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