

Oct. 9, 2026

To our valued community members:

I know, I know, it's just started to feel like we aren't living on the surface of the sun itself, but … it's time to start thinking about the holidays at Thistle Cottage, specifically the annual Jubilee of Trees. (Don't shoot me! I love fall, too, but we want to give ourselves – and all of you – time to plan and prepare!)

Many of you have participated before – thank you SO much – but in case you're new to this: the Jubilee of Trees is a seasonal display featuring a variety of decorated, themed holiday trees. Each tree is designed by a different community organization or business. Visitors get to vote on their favorite tree, and the winning tree's sponsor gets bragging rights and a small prize from our staff. It's free to visit & vote, so it's always popular.

Specific details and rules for this year's Jubilee of Trees are included on the next page, but first: we are now accepting reservations for participation! We do ask that everyone who wants to participate let us know as soon as possible so we can plan and prepare. Everyone who signs up before Nov. 1 will be listed on all our promotional materials.

We will continue to accept participants until all the available space has been filled or tree decorating is complete, even if the Nov. 1 deadline has passed, but late registrants may not be included on all the PR and may be asked to provide their own tree (more on that later).

The Jubilee of Trees officially opens to the public during our annual Holiday Open House. The Holiday Open House is usually one of our busiest days, with hundreds of people joining us to kick off their family celebrations and take their annual holiday photos, so it's a great way to get your name out there and let people know about you! You aren't required to attend, even if you decorate a tree, but of course we'd love to have you here. This year's Holiday Open House is scheduled for Nov. 28, the Saturday after Thanksgiving, from 9 a.m. to noon. Santa will be here that morning to greet and take photos with visitors of all ages, and we'll have refreshments, usually cookies with hot chocolate and cider (although with Kentucky weather being what it is, we have occasionally had to switch to cold drinks in the past). We'll also have some small craft activities and games available for kids, if space allows, and, again, it's all free.

This year we also have a new addition to the open house that we're super excited about. Muhlenberg County Tourism has generously partnered with us to host their annual Gumdrops on Rooftops showcase! We're thrilled they're allowing everyone the opportunity to check out the locally decorated gingerbread houses while they're here visiting Santa and viewing the Jubilee. It's a great addition, and we think it's going to be fantastic!

Muhlenberg County Tourism will continue to be the point of contact for Gumdrops on Rooftops, so please direct any questions to Destini McPherson at http://visitmuhlenberg.com or 270-641-0276. One thing is for sure, though: if past contests are any indication, there are going to be some incredibly impressive gingerbread creations on display. We can't wait!

As promised, guidelines for participation in the 2026 Jubilee of Trees are included on the next page. For more information or to reserve a spot in the Jubilee of Trees, call us at 270-338-4760 ext. 3.

We appreciate all your support, and we hope you will all consider participating in this fun, festive display. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

Sincerely,
Muhlenberg County Public Libraries

Muhlenberg County Public Libraries
Thistle Cottage

Important Info for Jubilee of Trees Participants

- Decorating will begin the afternoon of Nov. 9, and all trees must be completed by noon on Nov. 25. Any remaining undecorated trees will be removed from the exhibit that afternoon. You may decorate any time during normal business hours (Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m.) or by appointment outside regular hours. Please let us know as soon as possible if you need to make alternate arrangements to decorate your tree; we require advance notice for any deviation from our normal hours.
- All trees must be decorated in accordance with our overall "Holiday Joy" theme. We're flexible on individual tree themes, but all must be inspired by a fun, all ages-appropriate book, story, song or movie. Holiday-related themes are not required but of course will be accepted if appropriate. Many participants choose a topic that relates to their organization's mission. Generally, fictional stories do better with visitors, although there could be exceptions. Use your imagination! We want to see your creativity on full display – the more fun and fantastic, the better! We're counting on you to help us spread some seasonal joy. If you aren't sure what to choose for a theme, we're happy to help. Feel free to contact us for advice or recommendations!
- Duplicate themes are not allowed, sorry. We want to make sure all the trees are as unique as possible, so each must be inspired by a different book/movie/song. It's first come, first served, so we cannot stress this enough: let us know as soon as possible what your theme is so we can reserve it for you!
- We don't anticipate any issues, but final theme approval is at the discretion of Muhlenberg County Public Libraries staff. If you have any questions or concerns, call us at 270-338-4760 before planning decorations!
- We will provide an artificial tree for each participant upon request, while supplies last. Trees vary in size, shape and style, ranging from 6 to 9 feet tall. Most are between 6.5 and 7.5 feet tall, and all are green. If you need a specific tree size/shape, let us know so we can make sure there's an appropriate option.
- Tree choice operates on a first come, first served basis. We will have our trees set up in the gallery by noon on Nov. 9. Participating organizations can call or visit us any time after that to pick out which of the remaining trees you want to decorate. If you aren't ready to start decorating immediately, don't worry, we'll mark your chosen tree as "claimed" until you can get here to finish it.
  You can also bring your own tree if you prefer, just let us know so we can reserve an appropriate spot.
- We will set up the undecorated trees, but each participating organization is responsible for decorating their tree AND removing decorations after the end of the season. The Jubilee of Trees remains open to the public through the end of the day on Dec. 30, and decorations must be removed by Jan. 15 so we can place our trees back into their storage area and prepare for our next gallery exhibit. Muhlenberg County Public Libraries cannot store or be responsible for decorations remaining here after Jan. 15.
- Trees are NOT pre-lit, sorry, so participants will need to provide their own lights.
- We will provide extension cords, but we ask that you limit the number of outlets needed for your tree to 2. We'll have up to 15 trees in one room, and we don't want to trip any breakers or cause a fire hazard!
- Trees may be placed on pads or other barriers to protect the historic wood floors at Thistle Cottage, so we recommend bringing a tree skirt or other decoration to disguise the tree stand and floor protection.
- Please limit your decorations to the area immediately surrounding the tree, especially at the bottom. It's okay if decorations stick out a few inches beyond the circumference of the branches, but please be mindful of other participants' space. The gallery gets very full once all trees are placed and decorated, so excessively large decorations may be relocated or removed by Thistle Cottage staff if necessary to avoid encroaching on adjacent trees. We really don't want to have to do that, though!
- Please include signage with your business or organization name. Visitors want to know who sponsored each tree! You may also want to include the name of your theme somewhere. If possible, we'll display a library copy of the relevant inspiration with your tree, but this may not be possible with all themes.