



By Stephanie Johnson ★ Photos by Cody Storm Cooper

A Donna Quinn Christmas

On November 1, just one day after knee-high ghosts, goblins, princesses and pirates were knocking at Donna Quinn's door in search of treats, signs of Christmas are already popping up inside this McDougall township home.

A chubby, cheerful snowman sits on the stairs leading to the living room where a handful of nutcracker soldiers of all sizes and stature stand at permanent attention, their bared teeth waiting to crack open a crunchy walnut, almond or chestnut.

In a few weeks time, after spending countless hours stringing lights, setting up window displays, and Santa in a foamy bath, Donna will be ready to welcome the Christmas season and visitors to enjoy what has, steadily, overtime, taken on a life of its own.

"My mother decorated a little bit, back in the old days," explained Donna. "Back then, there weren't too many decorations, but she always made things with us. She'd sit down and do crafts with us. When my kids were growing up I wasn't quite as into it then as I am now, but I always decorated. Now the decorations and the decorating just start spreading. They grew."

Getting an early start on decorating allows Donna time to get ready for Christmas, as well as added time to enjoy, what can feel like a short festive season.

"I like to get it done, but once you get into it you're on a roll and you keep at it until you're done," she said. "That way it gives me freedom to go to parties, bake and wrap gifts."

The mother of three and grandmother of seven, said she started extending her holiday decorating when her children were older and she had time to give the hobby more attention.

Every room of the Quinn home, except the basement is decorated and some rooms even sport a common thread, like the kitchen, where all the gingerbread houses and men hang out for the season.

"Angels go in one room, snowmen in another, gingerbreads are in the kitchen," she said, describing the themes that are arising. "It never

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started out that way, but it happens when you get a collection. Oh yes, I decorate the bathroom, the living room – I even have Santa in the bathtub. We have three bathrooms, but of course, the shower gets used more than the bathtub.

"It is labour and time intensive, but when it's something that you enjoy, you find time. And then when I get tired, I leave it for an hour or so and then in the evening I go back at it for another couple of hours."

Even the outside is decked out with everything Christmas.

"We try to do those inflatable figurines and lights," she said. "We put a lot of lights out and decorate the archways."

One of the best parts about decorating is opening the storage boxes year after year. "There's a certain excitement and wonder, because you forget what you have," Donna said. "I try to remember who I got it from. You get that thrill every time you open something."

