

# A holiday treat

Gingerbread house charity event adds sweetness to the season



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**W**ith the holiday season in full swing, events such as dinners, cocktail parties and office meetings are full of delicious food and delectable sweet goodies continually tempting us!

For those like me, it is a literal gauntlet of chocolate, candy, cake, tarts and general tasty goodness through which I have to pass without enjoying too much or I will not fit my pants in the New Year!

But every now and then sugar can provide more than just an enhanced waistline and in a much bigger way than simply through its delicious sweet flavor.

Much can happen when determined individuals, local businesses and national brands come together to start something that benefits the people within a community and that's the magic that happened on Tuesday, Dec. 8 in Toronto.

This year, Cambria presented the first ever Gingerbread Building Competition in their downtown studio at Parliament and King streets.

Teams of well-known designers, builders and brands including Benjamin Moore, the Toronto Sun and Raywal Kitchens were invited to decorate a plain gingerbread house to be judged by a panel of design professionals, and then auctioned off with the proceeds going to the Herbie Fund at Sick Kids Hospital.

Participants had two hours to complete the house from scratch using the ingredients provided by the studio. (Yes, many goodies were eaten along the way!)

The Herbie Fund at Sick Kids Hospital was started in 1979 for Herbie Quinones of Brooklyn, New York who benefited from the charity that now shares his name.



The stakes were high as Jane Lockhart and fellow designer Anastasia Rentzos set to battle against other top designers.

Over 765 kids from 105 countries have received specialized medical and surgical assistance through the fund. Doctors from Sick Kids kindly donate their time free of charge to assist these needy children.

Started by Gina and Paul Godfrey, it continues today through generous corporations and private donors. (To read more about this fund and how you can help, visit [HerbieFund.com](http://HerbieFund.com).) Says Cambria Canada v-p Linda Leatherdale and event

host: "Cambria was honoured to host this great event in our Gallery and pleased so many celebrity designers took their time to be part of this fundraiser for the Herbie Fund at Sick Kids Hospital. At this time of year it is so wonderful to see the kind generosity of people who want to help sick children everywhere."

So, when I arrived at the Cambria Studio to prepare for "battle", I realized this wasn't going to be easy.



Six-year-old Kolton adds a finishing touch to Toronto Sun's entry at the Cambria Gingerbread House Decorating Contest.

The expectations were high as both spectators and judges eagerly anticipated the participants from the design community to create more than the 'average' house.

My partner and I, Anastasia, a fellow designer, had completed comprehensive 'research' the day before to ensure we had some good ideas but I saw the competition had done the same and was ready for a full-on decorating duel! (I admit, much of my research was actually eating m+m's on the sofa and justifying the reason: for the sake of the children!)

When it was time to compete, Anastasia and I decided to do something different from our competitors: we used a sweet and salty mix by including pretzels and crackers to create our vision of a "Canadian Winter in a Rocky Mountain Log Cabin."

The crackers formed the roof shingles and pretzels lined all the walls to mimic the look of logs. Heaps of icing and shredded coconut made snow drifts and icicles while touches of candy here and there added a bit of colour.

Clearly, this is not my calling but I'm proud to say we won third place in the event but the real winner was the Herbie Fund (which received \$1700 from the event.)

Congratulations to all the participants who were able to take their sweet tooth and put it to good use this holiday season.

*— Author, television personality Jane Lockhart appears as a regular guest on the Marilyn Denis show and is one of Canada's leading design experts.*



Second place winners from Benjamin Moore Paints — Francena Swales, Sharon Grech and Gloria Rinaldi.



'It's Gold Outside.' First prize went to the design team from Carey Mudford Interior Design.



Kolton is later interviewed by City-TV's Gord Martineau as Toronto Sun's Editor, New Homes and Condos and decorating team member Martin Slofstra looks on.