

STORY **JOYCE TURNER-GIONET**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

BIG *house.* BIG *heart.* BIG *cause.*

Holland Park created a spectacular winter wonderland style entrance to wow guests with fresh greenery.

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HAMILTON-BURLINGTON, INVITED US TO THEIR 35TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES.

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Festive touches in the kitchen maintain the holiday feel throughout the home. **RIGHT:** An open area between the kitchen and great room creates the perfect dining space.



The traditional kitchen beckons guests for cosy holiday gatherings.



Sitting down with OUR HOMES one Sunday morning to give us the low-down on their big, beautiful house, Nelly and Derek Christensen could be a poster couple for the fashion forward. Nelly rocks a pair of high, chunky, sparkly silver shoes. It is just after 9 a.m., an hour when most of us are not obsessing about what socks to wear, but Derek's are perfectly matched to complement his pink paisley shirt. It stands to reason then that the couple's home – 7,500 square feet on 40 acres in North Burlington – would be just as stylish. But hang on a minute, stylish it is, "a show home it isn't," says Derek. "We have four kids, including a foster child and two dogs. It's a home for family and friends

and we like to live in it. The kids and I do hoverboard on the main floor, so there are plenty of nicks and dents on the baseboards."

The house took six years to build, and the couple were quite frugal. They bought wholesale when possible. Kijiji finds are paired with auction or garage sale finds. Although they lead busy lives, they did a lot of the work themselves. When it comes to the holidays, Nelly and Derek, who aren't phased by entertaining 300 people, simply pick up the pace. In 2017, the Junior League of Hamilton-Burlington asked them to put their home on the **Annual Holiday House Tour of Distinctive Homes**.

For two days, the family moved out and the Junior League's team of decorators moved in. They rearranged furniture, added pieces and worked like elves to get it done on time. **Holland Park** added fresh greens to the entry, staircase and living room, scenting the home with evergreen. "When we came back to see the house two days later, I couldn't believe it was our home," says Nelly. "It was so beautiful and it really felt like Christmas." *Continued on page 28*

feature



The dining table shines with sparkle and glam.

LEFT: The dining room is layered with red, white and green decorations, creating a fresh, romantic and elegant space. **BELOW:** Beautiful blue takes centre stage in the two-storey great room.

The striking, chateau-like exterior boasts numerous turrets. **Festive Decor** outlined the shape with hundreds of white lights to let the house tell its own architectural story at night. Elegant containers overflowing with fresh greens and decked out with red velvet ribbon grace the steps leading to the mahogany front door.

Inside, Derek laid the hardwood himself. The older kids pitched in, gluing and hammering, with the promise that they could use the money they'd save for a trip to Walt Disney World. "Our motto is do it yourself, if you can," says Derek. The dining room's accent wall is another DIY project. Nelly found shades she liked in the returns section at the paint store, purchased stencils online and watched a YouTube video on how to do it. The stunning five-foot teardrop crystal chandelier over the table cost \$2.00 at a garage sale.

In the kitchen, the table was painted, and Nelly made her own chalk paint. "If you look closely, it's not perfect," she says. **Style Expressions Staging** and **Dal's Home Furnishings** were the creative muses behind the staging of the family room with its 25-foot ceiling. Rich jewel tones in hues of blue were an upbeat choice for a space that, next to the kitchen, would see most of the holiday entertaining.

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Ardent entertainers, Derek and Nelly loved the **The Casual Gourmet**'s holiday touches in their kitchen. "We love wine, cheese and fresh bread, so the long wooden serving boards edged with sparkling pine cones and cedar garlands really appealed to us," says Nelly. The kitchen, with its fireplace, dark wood and furniture-finish cabinetry, is quite traditional. The look works well with the vintage stoneware serving bowls on display. The travertine floor tiles were a Kijiji find. "The kitchen, in fact the whole house, smelled of fresh evergreens and a touch of cinnamon for weeks," says Derek.

Upstairs, the master bedroom is a light-filled space with french doors leading out to a balcony. Designer **Coreen Neal of AGD Interior Design & Decorating** was charged with layering a go-glam or go-home attitude onto its creamy canvas. The elegant jacquard-style comforter is the statement piece from which all colours, textures and patterns in the room evolved. Hung by the chimney with care are two pretty Christmas stockings. Silky cushions, faux-fur pillows, wool blankets and throws soften the design, because even during the holidays it's a room meant for relaxing. The large patterned rug, courtesy of **Rugs Bed & Bath Home Décor** is a perfect design anchor. In the master bathroom, the deep blue wall made a crisp backdrop for white Christmas décor. We have to mention the shoe closet off the master. For those who are shoe-obsessed, the word joy, prominently displayed on the windowsill, says it all.

Josette Giacalone of JAG Design Group created a whimsical storybook wonderland in another bedroom with swings covered in faux fur. It's a fun, magical holiday oasis. *Continued on page 32*

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Elements of shine were added to the ultra-glam master bedroom. **ABOVE:** The fireplace is the perfect canvas to dress for Christmas. **TOP:** Silver accents complement the beautiful blue in the en suite.



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Silver and gold add glamour to a pretty soft pink bedroom. **TOP LEFT:** Pink and grey elevate the luxe feel of the en suite. **TOP RIGHT:** Like stepping into a fairy tale, whimsical touches create a storybook wonderland. Josette Giacalone of JAG Design Group created this room.

So why do couples like Nelly and Derek open their house for a tour like this, knowing that plenty of people are going to traipse through their personal space over three days? "It's fun, you have professionals doing the work, it's interesting to see your own house through other people's eyes because it makes you appreciate what you have and most important, it was for a really good cause," Nelly says.

ABOUT THE JUNIOR LEAGUE OF HAMILTON-BURLINGTON'S ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR OF DISTINCTIVE HOMES
For the people of the community with unmet critical needs, the Junior League of Hamilton-Burlington acts as a bridge of hope by providing the gift of leadership, resources and solutions to empower individuals. In the true spirit of Christmas, proceeds from the Annual Holiday House Tour are used to help the league meet their goals. Contact Dianne Brown, House Tour Co-Chair, if you would like to offer your home for next year's tour. Email her at giftbaskets@divine-presents.com. OH

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