

Home for the Holidays

Written by Written by Hayley Mitchell

Monday, 30 November 2009 15:03 - Last Updated Friday, 04 December 2009 01:23

Five festive Valley families share their holiday traditions with *Arizona Foothills Magazine*.

The Luomas



Eric and Tatum with infant son, Cayden.

Eric is president of his family business, Cactus Flower, and owner of a debt collection agency. He is also a member of the Scottsdale Charros and Scottsdale Leadership. Tatum is the director of public relations at the Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau and an active member of Scottsdale Leadership.

What are your annual holiday traditions?

Every year, we participate in the Christmas Angel program where we purchase gifts for a child or family in need. Our favorite holiday activities are the Luminarias at Desert Botanical Garden, Movies in The Park at Biltmore Fashion Park and driving around the Valley to look at holiday light displays. Our niece and her friends set up a cocoa hut in her neighborhood each year to raise money for St. Mary's Food Bank by giving out hot cocoa and holiday treats in exchange for monetary donations and canned food.

Most memorable holiday moment from past years?

Christmas, 2004. Each present I opened from Eric had a warm theme, -everything from mittens to flannel pajamas and a long winter coat. I didn't know what to make of it since nothing was necessary for winter weather in Scottsdale until I opened the final gift: plane tickets to Chicago. I love surprises and had no clue that Eric had planned a trip to the Windy City to ring in the New Year.

Where will you spend the holidays this year?

We are so fortunate to have both of our families living in Scottsdale so we are able to spend time with all of our loved ones during the holiday season. We begin on Christmas Eve with church service followed by an early Christmas morning at home, opening presents and reflecting on our many blessings. This year will be even more special as our greatest gift of all is Cayden. After celebrating with the three of us, the 'holiday express' begins with stops at each of our parents' houses to celebrate, exchange gifts and eat traditional Christmas meals. Christmas ends with an annual 'fireside chat' gathering with good friends, a creative gift exchange and festive cocktails.

What are you most looking forward to this holiday season?

We are most looking forward to Cayden being a part of our holiday traditions and celebrating the season with him. We can't wait for those precious moments when he gets his first bike, leaves cookies and milk for Santa, and wakes us up on Christmas morning. We are excited to teach Cayden the importance of Christmas and hope to instill the same values of giving to those less fortunate all year long, which our parents did with us when we were young.

The Lanes



Beau and Donna, with children Chase, 21 (not pictured, at United States Air Force Academy); Reg, 18; Cooper, 17; Whitney, 5; and Beatrice, 17 (Italian exchange student, living with the Lanes for the year.)

Beau Lane is the CEO of E.B. Lane Advertising, Public Relations and Interactive, while Donna is a stay-at-home mother, with plenty of wonderful volunteer work on the side. She was the co-chair for Brophy College Prep's fundraising Fashion Show 2009, and she and Beau are supporters of Fresh Start, Hope and a Future, Pat Tillman Foundation and the Muscular Dystrophy Association, among other Valley organizations.

Where will you spend the holidays this year?

We like to stay at home over the holidays. It is a great time for all of us to be together. Our oldest son, who is a junior at the United States Air Force Academy, will be home with all of us.

What are your annual holiday traditions?

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Every year, Beau and one of our boys enter the Phoenix Country Club Father/Son Holiday Golf Tournament. It is a special time for the two of them with a great deal of anticipation and planning on how to win. Last year, Beau and Cooper came home with a trophy and we all cheered the big win!

Most memorable holiday moment from past years?

Four years ago, we were so blessed with the honor of being the new parents of a beautiful 9-month-old baby girl from China. Our most memorable holiday moment was the first Christmas Whitney was with us. She had just turned a year old and the boys worked very hard to make sure she was walking. We were all so happy that season.

Do you host any favorite holiday parties?

Each year, we open our home for an E. B. Lane holiday staff party. What a great time to relax and celebrate the season together.

Favorite Christmas tree decoration?

Our Christmas tree is decorated with dozens of handmade ornaments that our children have made through the years. They are special to us because each of our kids remembers when and where their ornaments were made.

The Mendozas



Mike and Jude, with children McKenna, 24; Josh, 26; and Josh's new wife, Mary, 26.

Mike and Jude are owners of The Mendoza Team of Keller Williams Realty and the Keller Williams North West Region (Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska) and active parents and community members.

Most memorable holiday moment from past years?

Mike: Josh and McKenna donning their Ghost Buster proton packs on Christmas morning. We have it on video! Jude: Opening the handmade gifts from Josh and McKenna when they were in elementary school.

What are your annual holiday traditions?

Mike: Every year we have our tamale party, and Jude has her cookie party. We do the Giving Tree at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, mass on Christmas Eve followed by dinner at Va Bene. We watch our favorite Christmas movies together. McKenna and I make our special guacamole together. Jude: Helping those in need. In 1990, I started the St. Vincent de Paul Giving Tree at our church and chaired the project for 15 years. Our family was always an integral part. Now 19 years later, the Giving Tree continues to assist more than 100 families in the Valley.

Do you host any favorite holiday parties?

Jude: This year will be the 25th year of our annual cookie party. Every year we host The Mendoza Team Christmas party in our home. We also have a tamale party several days before Christmas in honor of Mike's dad, who is Hispanic, and our love of Mexican food. It is yet another excuse to be together with family and friends.

What do you want for Christmas?

Mike: To be with my family and toast them with one of my grandfather's Tom & Jerry's in hand. Jude: Time with the people I love. McKenna: Pilates equipment because I am currently getting certified as a Pilates instructor. Josh and Mary: For all of us to be together and enjoy the holiday with our family.

What is the best gift you ever received?

McKenna: Spending time with the ones I love. Josh: Ghost Busters proton pack and my first regular Nintendo. Mary: Josh asked me to be his girlfriend on Christmas Eve; that was pretty awesome.

Favorite Christmas tree decoration?

Mike: All our nostalgic ornaments. So many fond memories. Jude: The homemade ornaments Josh and McKenna made as young children that hang on our 'memory tree' in our game room.

Favorite holiday outfit?

Definitely the family tradition: The new pajamas we open on Christmas Eve.

The Cabrals

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Rick and Kimberly, with children Austin, 15; Jagger, 13; Kaeli, 10; Jackson, 8; and Mikayla, 5 Rick is a very active father and owner of Newport Development, a land developer based in Scottsdale. Kimberly says her role, first and foremost, is as a mom, but she is also the founder and president of the Valley's nonprofit Mothers Awareness on School-Age Kids (MASK).

What are your annual holiday traditions?

Since we have a large family, all of our relatives come to us each year. We usually have anywhere from 15 to 20 family members. We always spend Christmas Eve dressing up, going to church services and coming home to a large Italian dinner. We take our annual group family picture, and send the kids to bed, so the adults have time together to exchange gifts and have some quiet time. On Christmas morning everyone joins us for a huge breakfast and spends the morning watching the kids open their presents. We finish with a Christmas dinner, with all the trimmings.

Most memorable holiday moment from past years?

One year, my husband and I were alternating opening up gifts from each other, to find that each gift we opened was exactly the same.

What are you most looking forward to this holiday season?

The opportunity to slow down, and enjoy being home with all of the family. Watching a lot of movies and baking.

Favorite Christmas tree decoration?

My favorite tree decoration is a silver star that always hangs front and center of our Christmas tree. It has my uncle's name engraved on it, who is no longer with us.

What's the best gift you ever received?

Last Christmas, I really wanted to find the perfect scripture to read for our Christmas Eve dinner. To my surprise, our oldest son, Austin, had typed out, for the entire family, the Biblical meaning of Christmas. It was an amazing gift and surprise.

Favorite holiday outfit?

There is nothing more perfect than watching all the kids in their pajamas on Christmas morning.

What do you want for Christmas?

Rick: For our entire family to be healthy. Kimberly: To be able to sleep in. Austin: A Mac laptop. Jagger: Basketball player, Jump Soles. Kaeli: iPod Touch. Jackson: Hot Wheels race track. Mikayla: American Girl doll.

Do you have a favorite holiday song?

Rick: 'Little Drummer Boy'. Kimberly: 'White Christmas,' or really anything by Elvis.

Favorite holiday book?

The Bible.

The Hanans



Ziv and Adar, with children Ophyr, 12; Nitzan, 9; and Gal, 4.

The Hanans moved to the United States from Israel seven years ago. In Israel, Ziv was a senior consultant in customer service, and Adar was a real estate attorney. Today, Ziv owns a coffee bar at Sachi Salon and Spa in Scottsdale, while Adar is a Hebrew teacher at the Jess Schwartz Jewish Community Day School. She also tutors for Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and is a licensed realtor in Arizona.

Where will you spend the holidays this year?

At home. We love to cook, bake and entertain with our family here in town.

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We light the Hannukiyah (Hanukkah Menorah) every night; we give gifts, -not every night, -but a few times during the eight days of Hanukkah; we sing Hebrew songs; eat latkes and Sufganiyot (Hanukkah doughnuts); and invite family and friends to celebrate with us.

What's the most memorable holiday moment from past years?

New Year's Eve in Las Vegas. We drove up to a high view point and saw 12 hotels display fireworks all at once. It was amazing!

What are you most looking forward to this holiday season?

Just to be together and have fun. Hopefully, Adar's brother and sister-in-law from Israel will be able to join us.

Do you attend or host any favorite holiday parties?

We host a Hanukkah party every year. At least one.

What are your New Year's Eve plans?

Usually, since the children are young, we like to invite friends over to our house. We cook a good meal, drink some good wine and talk. Sometimes we watch the New Year's Eve parties from around the world on TV or play games.

What do you want for Hanukkah?

Ophyr: A pet or a computer game or new songs for her iPod. Nitzan: Maxus Dragonoid Bakugan. Gal: Board games.

What's the best gift you ever received?

Our kids' homemade gifts are the best.

Do you have a favorite holiday song?

'My Tiny Candles' (in Hebrew) and 'White Christmas.'

Any favorite holiday decoration?

Lighting a Hannukiyah in the window. We also love Christmas ornaments.