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**Former White House Florist to Decorate Historic Cheekwood Mansion**

*10th annual Holiday LIGHTS to feature stunning new décor*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – To celebrate ten years of Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, former White House florist Laura Dowling will adorn Cheekwood’s historic Mansion with colorful and festive decorations.

Dowling’s lush and lively designs will fill period rooms inside the former family home of Leslie and Mabel Cheek enhancing an already enchanting Holiday LIGHTS experience for guests.

From 2009-2015, Dowling served as Chief Floral Designer for the White House. She managed the floral design for thousands of private and official White House parties, receptions, state dinners as well as large-scale installations for the Fourth of July, Halloween, and the iconic White House Christmas. Dowling is known for her contemporary and romantic style of flower arranging that is rooted in classic French design.

Dowling is the author of *Floral Diplomacy at the White House*, *A White House Christmas*, *Wreaths*, and *Bouquets*. She currently tours the country sharing her experiences at the White House and is a regular speaker at national, regional, and local horticulture associations, garden clubs and museums.

“We are excited to welcome Laura Dowling and her incredible talent to Cheekwood,” said Cheekwood President and CEO Jane MacLeod. “The holidays are such a joyful time at Cheekwood, and Laura’s beautiful creations will add an extra special element to this ten-year celebration and the beloved tradition of Holiday LIGHTS.”

In addition to Dowling’s décor, the holiday cheer begins at the front gates with elegant and creative light displays guests are accustomed to seeing at Holiday LIGHTS at Cheekwood. A one-mile walking path will be aglow with over one million twinkling lights, and visitors can also enjoy s’mores stations, seasonal libations, and a holiday marketplace. Voted “2023 Best Festival / Fair” by *The Tennessean*, Holiday LIGHTS is Nashville’s classic holiday tradition.

**Holiday Décor in the Mansion**

With a theme of “Gifts of the Garden,” Dowling’s handcrafted holiday décor will celebrate the rich history and natural beauty of Cheekwood. The bright and bold displays are inspired by the 13 distinct gardens at Cheekwood, and are designed to complement the Mansion’s classic architectural details, while bringing the outdoors in.

From handmade magnolia garlands to the iconic poinsettia tree in the Loggia, nine spaces inside the Cheek Mansion will feature inspiring and vibrant designs with a different theme – ranging from opulent plum, gold, and cranberry Italian-inspired décor in the entrance foyer, to a citrusy *L’Orangerie* theme in the Loggia, and a classic “hunt country” display in the library. As visitors stroll through each thoughtfully curated room, they will be surrounded by scenes of the season set against the backdrop of the warm and inviting historic Mansion and gardens.

“I am excited and honored to be part of Cheekwood’s iconic holiday installation this year. It’s been such a pleasure to collaborate with the garden’s talented team on this project to envision special room by room themes that complement the mansion’s period colors and décor and honor Cheekwood’s holiday traditions,” said Dowling. “In addition, I also look forward to designing alongside the volunteers who will be joining me from across the country, including my friend, legendary White House designer and Nashville’s own Jim Marvin, who has designed beautiful ornaments that will adorn the trees. The goal is to treat visitors to an unforgettable and magical holiday experience celebrating ‘Gifts of the Garden’ at Cheekwood.”

### **Lectures and Book Signings**

In addition to the décor at the Mansion, Dowling will debut her new book on Christmas decorating, *Designing Christmas*, at a lecture and book signing on November 18. The event is ticketed and open to the public. The book provides practical tips and step-by-step instructions to inspire readers to incorporate holiday décor in their homes using 10 elements and 10 different design schemes. The book will be available for purchase for the first time at Cheekwood’s gift shops. Dowling will also offer another lecture on December 6 and two workshops on December 7. These ticketed events will be open to the public.

### **First Ladies Exhibition**

In collaboration with the White House Historical Association, Cheekwood will host a temporary exhibition in the Mansion galleries highlighting former First Ladies and their holiday decorating themes. *Holidays at the White House with the First Ladies: Jacqueline Kennedy to Michelle Obama* will feature photographs illustrating the former First Ladies’ unique design motifs. The exhibition will be open to guests for the duration of Holiday LIGHTS.

### **Tickets**

Holiday LIGHTS opens November 23 and runs until January 5. The seasonal festival will be open seven nights a week except for Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day. Timed-entry tickets must be purchased online in advance. A ticket pre-sale

for Cheekwood members begins October 1. Tickets will go on sale to the public on October 15. Laura Dowling's Holiday Décor in the Mansion and the *Holidays at the White House with the First Ladies* exhibition will also be open for daytime viewing during Cheekwood's regular operating hours, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

*Holiday LIGHTS is presented by Truist Bank and sponsored by Amazon with a special thanks to Outdoor Lighting Perspectives.*

### **About Cheekwood Estate & Gardens**

With its intact and picturesque vistas, Cheekwood is distinguished as one of the leading Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55-acres of gardens, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum and art museum with furnished period rooms and permanent collection galleries devoted to American art from the 18th to mid-20th centuries. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children's Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring outdoor monumental sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood hosts seasonal festivals including Cheekwood in Bloom, Summertime at Cheekwood, Cheekwood Harvest and Holiday LIGHTS. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and nationally as a Level II Arboretum. It is a three-time voted USA Today Top 10 Botanical Garden and in 2021 was recognized by Fodor's as one of the 12 Most Beautiful Gardens in the American South. Cheekwood is located eight miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive. It is open Tuesday through Sunday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., with extended days and hours of operation depending on the season. Check [cheekwood.org](https://www.cheekwood.org) for current hours and to purchase advance tickets required for admission.

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### **Images for Media**

<https://show.pics.io/press-images/collection/66476a385f2d8f4a1b811370>

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