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# Dexter HS/Southeast Alumna Selected as White House Holiday Decorator

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Southeast Missouri State University alumna Jordan Sandusky recently had the extraordinary opportunity of helping decorate the White House in Washington, D.C., for the holidays.

Decorating the White House has been a five-year dream for Sandusky, a Dexter, Missouri, native and 2015 Southeast graduate.

“The application process is very competitive and I applied five years in a row and never heard anything back until this year,” she said. “There were over 7,000 applications submitted for this holiday season. I was one of 125 people chosen.”

While some people were only selected to work one of two shifts, she was fortunate enough to be included in a small group selected for the entire week, Sandusky said. She worked under a Chicago event planning company lead by a designer who worked with the First Lady to create her vision for the holiday season.

“I spent four days decorating the White House and a fifth day for a luncheon with the First Lady,” she said.

Sandusky graduated from Southeast with a Bachelor of Science in human environmental studies, interior design option, and is a designer for Redwood Construction, a commercial

construction company out of southern California specializing in multi-living facilities such as apartment complexes, student housing complexes, senior living facilities, and some hotels.

This year's White House holiday theme is "American Treasures," with 50 live Christmas trees featuring 14,000 red ornaments and 40 berry topiaries ranging in size from three to 12 feet.

"The entire theme and vision is conceived by the First Lady, and it was then our job to help bring her vision to life," she said.

The first two days Sandusky worked at an offsite warehouse location.

"During that time, we opened and sorted all of the new ornaments and decorations for the year," she said. "We also began creating some of the decorations, such as the berry topiaries and the red ornament garlands that are shown at the base of the trees in the Grand Foyer and Cross Hall."

At the White House, she was a part of a team that decorated the Vermeil Room, Diplomatic Reception Room and the hall of berry topiaries.

"The berry topiaries were covered with thousands of individually placed red berries and took the longest amount of time to complete," she said.

Almost every room in the White House was decorated, including the Oval Office and the private residence, Sandusky said. The White House gingerbread house created for this year was an elaborate 500-pound masterpiece that featured not only the traditional White House but included the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial and the Capitol Building.

Sandusky also got to see HGTV's filming of their 2018 White House Christmas special that will air at 5 p.m. CT Sunday, Dec. 9.

Her work will be seen by multiple tours a day plus a number of events held at the White House during the holiday season, Sandusky said. She was told it's estimated the White House hosts approximately 30,000-40,000 guests throughout December.

When the White House holiday decorations were complete at the end of her week's work, the First Lady hosted a luncheon for the holiday decorating volunteers. Mrs. Trump spoke

with them during the luncheon and thanked them for their work, she said. White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders and Presidential Counselor Kellyanne Conway also attended the luncheon, Sandusky said. During the reception, the volunteers also got to see the President depart on Marine One from the south lawn of the White House.

“It was such an honor to have been a part of this amazing experience,” she said. “The decorators get to see inside some parts of the White House that are closed to the public. It was surreal to think about all the incredible people who have walked those same hallways. It was an experience I will never forget.”

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