



cary's southern snowman

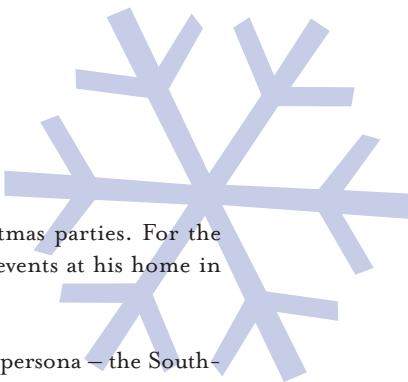
RICK NORDMAN: CARY'S SOUTHERN SNOWMAN
HE DELIVERS WHEN MOTHER NATURE DOESN'T



Rick Nordman, 38, is known for his Christmas parties. For the last 12 years he's hosted the semi-formal events at his home in Cary's Cedar Creek neighborhood.

And after last year's party he's even adopted a new persona – the Southern Snowman.

"I'm always taking everything to the next level. I'm the type of guy that improves on the party every year," says Nordman with a grin that makes you wish you were on the guest list.



TEXT BY KATE TURGEON





In 2006 he gave 150 friends what no other holiday host in Cary did; he blanketed his backyard in snow. That's right – cold, fluffy, don't-see-it-too-much-around-here snow.

Born in Massachusetts, Nordman always had a soft spot for soft snow. But for the last 25 years he's called North Carolina home and lived with its low-snow or no-snow winters. So he'd travel to places like Snowshoe Mountain in West Virginia to snowboard with friends and just take what he could get when it came to snow in Cary.

In January of 2000 more than 20 inches of snow fell on the Triangle area. It was a welcomed sight for Nordman and his buddies. After the excitement of that storm they tossed around the idea of making their own snow, but didn't have success finding the type of equipment that was suited for residential snowmaking, he says.

But by 2006 that equipment was out there and Nordman was going to get his hands on it.

A week before the annual Christmas party his friend, Jimmy Earp, sent him a link to a website that sold snowmaking equipment. Intrigued, Nordman did a day's worth of research before purchasing the equipment, which included a large snow gun, high-pressure air compressor and high-power water pump. He checked the forecast and knew the weather would be right (less than 30°F with other favorable factors) and prepared to bring snow to his own backyard, which he named Mt. Roundtree after his street.

Like doting parents caring for a newborn baby, Nordman, Earp and Mark McClure took shifts during two long nights of making snow. Committed to the cause, they moved the snow gun at regular intervals and filled up the power washer with gas. Friends for more than 20 years, the guys originally met while attending Apex High School together.

With the only snow-filled backyard in the Triangle area, Nordman welcomed his guests to Mt. Roundtree with its festive, light-filled decorations.

"Seeing the looks on everybody's faces...it was worth the sleepless nights, the cost and effort," he says.

Blown away by the unfamiliar sight of snow but not altogether surprised by Nordman's extra effort, some guests threw snowballs. Others, even some dressed in suits, searched the garage for sleds. But most people, he says, were just happy enjoying the view of the winter wonderland from his deck or inside the house.

Nordman's dog, Sydney, enjoyed the new-fallen snow too; preferring to sit in the snow rather than on nearby grass. She's the official mascot of Mt. Roundtree, says Nordman. "She loves the snow as much as I do."

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Nordman welcomed a surprise guest too – a local news truck spotted the snow and stopped by to see what, and who, was behind it. The attention wasn't surprising since his home backed to busy Maynard Road.

Of course, that first snow eventually melted but winter had another cold spell to offer in February 2007. With chilly temperatures on his side, Nordman set to work doing what he enjoys – making snow. His backyard was flooded with people; some snowboarded, sledged and played while others were just happy to look on and ask questions.

A video of that day's activities can be seen on his website (www.southernsnowman.com) and a photo collage is also online. On the video kids and kids-at-heart can be seen playing in the snow and commenting on its wonders.

"Kids were seeing snow in my backyard and for some of them it was the first time they'd seen snow," says Nordman. "It made those electric and water bills all worth while."

What's next for the Southern Snowman?

Acting on the belief that snow isn't just fun but can also attract attention, Nordman plans to use his skills for commercial ventures, such as freelance snowmaking for local businesses. He's also busy doing consulting work for people who, like him, just love snow and want to bring it to their homes.

For Nordman, snowmaking in the south is all about fun and convenience. "You don't have to drive in it or shovel it," he explains. Basically, it's enjoyment without the hassle.

He took his snow equipment and message – "Bringing snow to the south one house at a time" – to this year's fall edition of the Southern Ideal Home Show. Kids and adults alike were intrigued, just like Nordman himself had been last year.

Who knows, maybe there will be even more homemade snow in the Triangle this winter.

Also on Nordman's to-do list is partnering with a non-profit organization to help bring the wonders and excitement of snow to some of the area's children. He's currently meeting with local non-profits to discuss opportunities for this winter. It is something he says he's always wanted to do. "Both Jimmy and I have full-time jobs that pay the bills, but this is just fun," says Nordman. "Snow is a novelty."

And it's a novelty that he says will be part of his life even when snow is not in Mother Nature's plan thanks to a snowmaking gun, air compressor and water pump. "I'll always make snow in my backyard," he says. "Who doesn't like snow? When it falls it is quiet and beautiful."

For this winter, he's upgraded to an electric power washer so there'll be no need for refueling like before last year's party.

And what about this year's Christmas gathering? He says he doesn't know how he'll top last year's surprise snowfall. "I don't know... maybe some live reindeer," he jokes.

While Christmas party plans may be up in the air, one thing is guaranteed; Nordman is looking forward to winter. "Oh, I'm ready for it," he says, grinning like a kid on Christmas Eve. ❄️