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THE HERALD

NEWS ONLINE AT WWW.SVHERALD.COM

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2009 — \$1.50

Bisbee opens its doors to visitors

Historic Home Tour

BY ADAM CURTIS
HERALD/REVIEW

BISBEE — The historic houses in Old Bisbee always attract attention, and well more than 1,000 people took advantage of a chance to see the inside of some of these homes during the 27th Annual Historic Home Tour on Friday and Saturday.

There were 1,150 tickets printed for the event, and additional copies had to be made Saturday afternoon to accommodate a healthy turnout this year, said Bobbe Hossman, chair of the home tour and a member of the Bisbee Woman's Club. The club has been running the event for eight years, and it is the club's largest fundraiser each year. Last year, 1,157 people attended the tour, and the club raised \$8,500 to donate to local charities, Hossman said. Organizers were on pace to do even better this year, though final counts were not available.

Different houses and areas of town are featured every year to keep the event fresh for return visitors, Hossman said. This year, the proceeds will benefit Border Animal Rescue, Verhelst Recovery House and the Central School Project.

Tom Schmidt and his wife, Karen, have made the trip from Tucson just about every year for at least the last 10 years, he said.

"It's just fascinating; it's fun to see how creative people have gotten with



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One of the homes shown Saturday during Bisbee's 27th Historic Home Tour.

their homes," he said.

"You're surrounded by the history and the context of the town and that's very cool, but then to see what people have done, you go back feeling a little bit inspired," Schmidt said.

He added that it's interesting to see where people find places to build on the sides of hills.

"You have to kind of work to get to some of them. There are no easy walks in Bisbee, but they're all worth it," Schmidt said.

For their friends John Mahn and Laurel Hizer, it was a chance to scope out houses to buy, Schmidt said.

They are considering retiring in Bisbee, Mahn said. They were also

married in Bisbee.

"We've been coming here for so many years, and it just felt right that we be married in a place that we loved," Hizer said. They enjoyed the houses on the tour, but may need more money to invest in a Bisbee home.

While most of the homes on the tour date back to the early 1900s or even the 1800s, one was recently rebuilt on the site of an old miner's shack that was condemned because of a mold problem.

When Hossman asked George Bellinger to include his house on the tour, he said it could not be because it is not historic, he said. "She said, 'But it is historic because Bisbee will

melt; these old houses will go down. Somebody has to say, 'What are we going to have for the future?'

"So I asked my son, 'Can you build me a new, old Bisbee shack?'" Bellinger said. He wanted the outside of the house to look like the simplest possible structure that a miner would have built, but the inside is totally eclectic. "You don't see two things that match," Bellinger said. His staircase, for example, is covered with a hodge podge of art and magazine clippings.

It took shape when some of his dinner guests asked to help out, and Bellinger broke out some paint, glue, magazines and maple stain, he said. "I said, 'I'll open some more wine, I'll turn the music up,' and I said, 'Let's get at it.'"

"Five hours later, at 2 in the morning, this was the result of five drunken people," Bellinger said. "It's all just recycled junk, but they love it.

"Yesterday was phenomenal. People love this place, I was astonished," he said.

Bob Klein and his partner, Jeff Trujillo, showed off two houses, one of which is now available to rent on a nightly basis, Klein said. They lived in the Doublejack guesthouse, which was built in 1895, while renovating their current home, which was built in 1906 as a boarding house.

"I worked on this house for five years. I thought it was going to take three months. I don't know what I was thinking," Trujillo said. "It's easy to laugh about now."