

Become the perfect host

By *ABBIE GRIPMAN*

Sun Staff Reporter

Guests coming in for the holidays? Don't panic. With a little planning you can be the perfect host, said Richard Svendsen, who co-owns Flagstaff's Starlight Pines Bed and Breakfast with partner Michael Ruiz.

There are many things to consider when preparing for guests. Before they arrive it's best to ask a few questions, Svendsen said, no matter how well you think you know your visitors.

"Find out about dietary needs," said Svendsen, who is also the president of the Northern Arizona Bed and Breakfast Association and a board member of the Arizona Bed and Breakfast Association.. "Ask questions before they come. They would appreciate it."

In addition to questions about dietary needs, Svendsen recommends asking about medical issues and disabilities. As a rule, he said, keep older visitors on the first floor so they don't have to negotiate stairs.

For visitors with kids, plan on having an array of age-appropriate movies, games and books on hand. Consider providing guests access to a portable DVD player as Starlight Pines does for its guests.

To welcome your guests and put them immediately at ease, have a batch of fresh cookies, covered, and set in a common area, where guests can enjoy them.

In addition, Svendsen stocks the fridge with a variety of drinks.

"Both Coke and Pepsi," he said, to cater to every taste. It's also important to have a lot of bottled water easily available to guests.

If you're cooking for your guests, offer a meal that would satisfy a variety of tastes. For after dinner, Svendsen and Ruiz provide a cocoa bar stocked with hot chocolate, cinnamon sticks, marshmallows, crushed candy and chocolate bits.

Another way to keep your guests comfortable is to have extra pillows and blankets in their room. Include a nightlight in the hallway -- your visitors aren't used to your house and may need the extra illumination to find the bathroom.

To help guide your visitors during their visit, Svendsen said there's any easy way to get the information and resources you'll need.

"I would highly recommend going to the Visitor Center and grabbing maps, shopping and restaurant guides, even hiking trail guides," he said. "It's a great stop for a host or visitors."

The Flagstaff Visitor Center is located at 1 E. Route 66 at the train station downtown.

Some other ideas are:

Give each guest different color bath towels so they remember which ones to use;

Stock the bathroom with extra toiletries in case someone forgot toothpaste, shampoo and razors;

Put bottled water, snacks, books and magazines in each bedroom;

Think of your guests' favorite things and try to have them available, such as a favorite coffee, tea or chocolate;

Dress up the room with holiday decorations;

Have empty hangers in the closet and drawer space if possible;

Pick up a variety of inexpensive toys for the kids. Check out Bookman's for gently used or the 99 Cent Store.