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Lewis family lights up Warwick sky to benefit Autism Project



COWESETT SHOW: Everett Lewis says that his family's light display in front of their home on Shenandoah Road is the best they done in 21 years. It's worth a visit.

(WARWICK BEACON PHOTO)

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By Thomas Greenberg

The “light-o-rama” spectacular on Shenandoah Road, put on by Everett Lewis and the rest of his family of seven for the last 21 years, brightens up the streets of Cowesett every night during the holiday season, and Lewis said that this year’s display is the best yet.

Not only do two to three thousand people visit while the display is going from the day after Thanksgiving until December 31, he said, but last year alone the Lewis family was able to raise \$2,500 for a charity “near-and-dear” to his heart, the Autism Project.

As the display has gotten bigger over the years, the Lewis’ have supplemented the increased attention – they’ve even got a shout-out on the 106.9 FM radio dial that says “Merry Christmas from the Lewis Family” – with LED lights that change color, light decorations on festive structures in the yard, 29 synchronized songs playing on 106.9, 12 blow mold Christmas decorations, and, on some nights, Everett himself dressed up as Santa Claus.

The most visible attraction is the 23-foot tree that has 16 strands of light draped over it. The yard also has four leaping arches, two starbursts, and five shooting star decorations, all of which have LED lights all across them.

More than 100 extension cords are used to control the lights, which have the ability to show off millions of different colors.

This year, the color of the lights are especially important, Lewis said, because they will go completely purple at times to recognize Gianna Cirella, the Toll Gate student who passed on this fall, and all blue at times to thank local law enforcement and first responders.

His brother was autistic, so Lewis is especially understanding of autistic children, he said, which is why their Santa, who makes an appearance on either Friday or Sunday of each week, is one of the few autism-friendly ones who “aren’t intimidated” by autistic children.

Part of the reason he does this is to raise funds for the Autism Project to pay for autistic children to go to Camp Wannagoagain” for summer camp. He sets up a donation bowl out in the yard and said that although there aren’t any major donations, “people are always charitable” and make sure to leave five or one dollar bills. Every dollar raised goes to this cause.

In terms of cost, the LED lights are less than \$100 each year, and his wife and his five children help him to put up the lights each year. They want to make sure that everything is positioned in the right way and the lights, which shine bright both on the decorations across the yard and inside the windows of the house, look good, so the setup process takes over 120 hours to complete.

“My children love it,” he said. “They’re always coming up with new songs and ideas.”

Visitors can actually change the songs, of which there are 29 each night, by going on vote.lewischristmas.com and selecting which holiday song they want to play next. The songs are broadcast through a radio transmitter and played all throughout the night, when the display is on.

Lewis said that they're the only light show in New England that allows visitors to change the songs live.

The light show is displayed on Sunday through Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 8:55 p.m. and on Friday and Saturday nights from 5:00 p.m. to 9:25 p.m., weather permitting.

"It's been a great turnout," Everett said about this year's display. "It's really a fun thing."

For more information on when Santa will be out or anything else on the lights display, the Lewis' have a Facebook page, called Lewis Family Christmas, and a website, www.lewischristmas.com. A video of the light show can be viewed at vimeo.com/lewischristmas.