



Part of the Christmas light extravaganza on the property of Tim and Grace Gay, who live in the Town of Union Vale.
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Lights

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"It's important for us to become a vehicle here to reach out to the community with the money they raise," said John Welsh, president of the Fire Department.

Last year, the department raised \$8,544 in five nights. That money and other funds raised by the department were used to help cancer victims, provide a college scholarship, purchase three generators for Superstorm Sandy victims on Long Island, help clean up a tanker accident that spilled thousands of gallons of gasoline, provide safety lessons at Vail Farm Elementary School students and assist a family whose house was damaged by a fire.

"It's near and dear to my heart, being that cancer has affected my family quite a bit," Tim Gay said. "It means a lot to me that donations from the display are helping people."

There is a bucket near the display to place donations every night for the

Fire Department. Members of the department will be present, collecting money 12 nights.

"The fact I can help makes me feel very good," added Emily Gay, 17. "It's my favorite part of the year."

The display runs every night until Dec. 29. As soon as the elements come down, the family starts brainstorming new ideas. Tim Gay uses his engineering degree to develop the designs and make the vision a reality. He said the family must formulate a design and choreograph the music by the end of January.

Dan Gay, 16, a sophomore at Arlington High School who hopes to be an engineer, said he wants to design a three-dimensional sphere next year.

"It's fun to see how much people love it," he said. "Every once in a while we look at the window and are amazed we do something so amazing."

The designs, which include penguins, a rainbow, a moon, an giant equilateral triangle, a pink heart dedicated to Tim Gay's sister, who died of cancer, are held

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up by a rope-and-pulley system that has been strong enough to sustain strong winds and heavy precipitation. In 17 years, the display hasn't had any major problems, Tim Gay said.

The tradition was inspired by Tim Gay's mother. He said his grandfather passed down a deep appreciation and love for Christmas, which have spread to the youngest generation.

"She use to make Christmas feel magical," he said of his mother.

He said the work and commitment that go into the display teach the children about technical works, programming, project management and the bringing of joy to others.

The thousands of hours spent in every years building the display brings the family closer, he said.

As the children finish high school and look ahead to college, Gay wouldn't say how long he envisions keeping it going. But when the children eventually go their separate ways, they all promise to keep the family's love of the holidays alive.

John Gay, 14, said the community has embraced the family. The teen, who is referred to as "Monk" or "Monkey" by his family for his fearless tendency to climb trees, said he hopes to wrap lights throughout a 60- to 70-foot tree in the front lawn, so the lights can travel from top to bottom quickly.

"I think we've been a big part of the community," he said.

"As long as I'm here, I'm going to do as much as I can to keep this going."

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