

Burlington Township family lights up house for the holidays with 30,000 lights

Ron Murdza has been lighting up his street for seven years



Burlington Township resident Ron Murdza says he's always loved decorating for Christmas. But in 2009, he took his passion to the next level.



Van Camp siblings Ashley, 5, and Tyler, 7, donate money to the Burlington Township Food Pantry outside Murdza's home. Murdza has raised almost \$8,000 for the pantry to date.

This year, Murdza has decorated his family's home with approximately 30,000 lights. The computer-controlled light display allows visitors to watch the lights in sync with a musical playlist by tuning their car radio to 96.1 FM.

Getting the lights to sync with the music isn't nearly as easy as connecting the lights to a power supply, though. Murdza has to program each individual light to match with each tenth of a second for the chosen song. Murdza says each song takes him at least eight hours to program, and this year he chose 20 songs.

On his website, Murdza describes the process he uses to get his songs to play on the radio. He uses a low-powered FM transmitter and dials it to a frequency that is not in use locally by another station to ensure a static-free channel. The transmitter is then connected to the audio jack of the computer that runs the show. This allows visitors to listen to the songs from the comfort of their car while parked as far as two blocks away.

Murdza started putting his lights up in the beginning of October so the show would be ready to go for the day after Thanksgiving. It takes him all of October and the better part of November to get the display ready, and he starts working on programming the lights as early as summer.

"It's been crowded every night already," Murdza said, adding the show usually draws a crowd closer to Christmas but not so much at the end of November.

While he programs the lights on his own, Murdza says his wife and children, who he calls his "elves," are a huge help to him with putting up the display. Murdza added his 11-year-old son Joey loves to look out of his window all night and watch visitors enjoying the display.

"We love Christmas. That's our favorite time of year," Murdza said. "My wife goes nuts with the decorations inside; I go nuts with the decorations outside."

Murdza also receives help from his neighbors. For the past three years, one of Murdza's neighbors has been hosting a Santa night in her driveway to bring more people to the display.

In the week leading up to Christmas, the line to see the display often wraps around the block. In the past, visitors have showed up by the busload.

Murdza, who is a full-time fireman for the Hamilton Township Fire District, accepts money and donations for the Burlington Township Food Pantry in lieu of charging cars to watch the display.

"People used to throw money in my mailbox," Murdza said. "That's not why I do it."

Murdza says the food pantry donations are a huge motivator for him to keep putting on the light show. Murdza has raised more than \$2,000 some years and has raised close to \$8,000 to date. There is a food pantry bin located outside of the Murdza home.

The real reason he does it, though, is to see the joy on visitors' faces.

"There have been times when people are getting out of their cars at night and dancing in the street. That's how enjoyable it is," Murdza said.

The Murdza home is located on the corner of Steeplechase Boulevard and Tack Way in Burlington Township. The lights are on from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Friday through Saturday and will remain up through the beginning of January. Visit www.burlingtonlights.com for more information.