

Long Island Now

1M lights illuminate Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck

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The wooded path that winds through Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck in Center Moriches has been transformed into a winter wonderland, with about 1 million light bulbs illuminating the scene.

Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck, a camp for handicapped children, and Independent Group Home Living Inc., which also serves disabled children and adults, have come together to create the first Celebration in

Lights, a drive-through holiday light display. Members from both parties hope it will become an annual event and grow in size and complexity every year.

It takes about 15 minutes to drive through the light show, in which cars pass through lighted archways and pass by houses covered in lights, inflated Santa Claus units and other characters, a giant fireplace with a yule log burning and other light displays.

Frank Lombardi, director of IGHL, said he and a board member from Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck have wanted to do the light display for years, modeled off of other drive-through displays at Jones Beach and the Holtsville ecology center, neither of which are running this year.

Lombardi said IGHL and the camp secured \$15,000 in local sponsorships to cover the cost of the display and many of the lights and decorations were donated.

The entrance fee is \$15 per carload and proceeds will be split between IGHL and Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck.

Bridget Costello, director of the camp, said more than 200 cars came through during opening weekend and everyone was enthusiastic.

“People are actually rolling down their windows and yelling, ‘Great job!’ she said.

In the future, Costello said she hopes to make the display interactive, with live carolers -- possibly volunteers from a local high school -- someone playing Santa, and even live reindeer walking through the woods.

The camp is located at 2 Chet Swezey Rd., Center Moriches. Celebration in Lights is open from 5 to 9 p.m., Friday through Sunday for the next two weekends, and also on Wednesday, Dec. 22 and Thursday, Dec. 23.



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