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Parade of Lights Transforms Lake Perris

Lake Perris became the canvas for a festival of lights as dozens of highly festooned watercraft showed off their holiday decorations during the annual Parade of Lights at the State Recreation Area. Canoes, kayaks, cabin cruisers, pontoons, wakeboards, bass boats and sailboats took part in the 15th annual Parade of Lights. The size and scope of the decorations was limited only by available space and the imagination of the owners.

This year's festival included holiday lights by the thousands, Santa Claus, reindeer, Christmas trees, stars, nativity scenes, candy canes, even a Ferris wheel. More than 25 vessels took part in the Dec. 7 Parade of Lights.

The City of Perris teamed up with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department to take part in the display. Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough decorated the department dive team's tri-hull boat, which is used to search waterways and locate evidence needed during criminal investigations. The boat comes equipped with sonar capable of detecting objects as small as a billfold at the bottom of Lake Perris. The sheriff's department provides law enforcement services to Perris under a contract with the City.

"This is a great chance for the City of Perris to show off the lake that bears its name," Yarbrough said. "Not that many cities have a lake. This gives us a great opportunity to join with our police department and interact with Perris residents."

The City's boat was covered with hundreds of flashing lights, a wreath, star and a City banner. Perris Police Chief Mike Judge led a contingent of officers who decorated the boat and paraded in a cove along with the other vessels. Judge came away impressed.

"We're going to have to have our own theme next year—maybe the Polar Express!" Judge said. "I am really impressed with the number of boats and the time and skill put into the decorating. It's great to be part of a neat community event."

Perris Community Service Officer Nina Zalunardo wrapped red garland around the steering wheel of the law-enforcement boat.

"Cops are people too," she said. "We have the holiday spirit just like everybody else."

Boaters arrived early to decorate their craft and get them into the water.

Mike and Barbara Sorter of Riverside marked their seventh year at the Parade of Lights, decorating their pontoon with candy canes, a Christmas tree, Snoopy and Charlie Brown inflatable characters and a Nativity scene.

"It's a great tradition," Mike Sorter said. "It's not too big. It's small enough where everybody has lots of fun."

Buddies Steve Phillips, Mark Settles and Paul Staggs decorated their 16-foot boat with their own unique take on the holidays—a double Ferris wheel that turned while the boat was under power. The trio comes to Lake Perris for the fishing. The Parade of Lights is great too.

Staggs said the spinning Ferris wheel is something to behold.

"It goes around and it looks really cool," he said.

Holly Reyna, her husband Noe, daughter, Marina and their friend, Robert Montero, launched two boats in the Parade of Lights. They came with a 10-foot rowboat and a 16-foot powerboat. Decorations included Santa Claus, a Christmas tree, star and more than 1,000 lights.

Holly Reyna said the group has been attending the Parade of Lights for several years. It's a great way to kick off the season and it shows their spirit for the City of Perris and the Lake Perris State Recreation Area.

"It helps bring the community together," she said.



Perris Police Officer Nina Zalunardo decorates the sheriff's department boat that appeared in the 15th annual Parade of Lights at Lake Perris.



Perris Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Yarbrough helped decorate the sheriff's department boat, which the City collaborated to decorate. Yarbrough: "This is a great chance for the City of Perris to show off the lake that bears its name."



This boat was adorned with reindeer, elves and Santa Claus.



Santa and his sleigh get ready to launch from this boat that took part in the Parade of Lights Dec. 7 at the Lake Perris State Recreation Area.



Dick Deboer covered himself with lights as he took part in the Parade of Lights.

Admission to the 2013 Parade of Lights was free to everyone who brought a Christmas gift valued at \$10 or who donated that amount to support by Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.