



Days before the Christmas lights go up in downtown Seneca, the decorations are leaned against their respective poles. Crews then drive down the roads plugging in each fixture to check for burned out or missing bulbs to be replaced before they take their place on telephone poles throughout the city.

CAITLIN HERRINGTON | THE JOURNAL

Crews put in long hours to decorate Seneca

BY JUSTIN LEE CAMPBELL
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SENECA — When Rick Lacey began helping decorate the city of Seneca for the holiday season two years ago, he had no idea how much work went into the project.

Lacey, the director of Seneca's recreation department, said he didn't think much work went into decorating the city at all.

"As far as getting all the decorations up, it's a big project involving three different departments," Lacey said.

The city street department and Seneca Light and Water start working with the recreation department about three weeks before Seneca's Christmas parade, which traditionally takes place the first Monday after Thanksgiving.

"It's a very time-consuming process," Lacey said.

The three-week process starts with making sure each individual bulb on the Christmas lights works and replacing the ones that don't work, according to Lacey. Once city officials check the lights, the beautification crew puts lights on trees, shrubs and light poles down Main Street.

Lacey said the beautification crew works for about a month with three to four people helping at a time.

"The street department then jumps in and brings a small bucket truck to trim a few trees before starting with more lights," he said. "They help us with the larger trees."

Street department director Mark Krabbe said decorating the city is a team effort, from plugging in the light bulbs to see which ones are burned out to setting up stand-up decorations in Norton Thompson Park.

"They all work together," Krabbe said.

The street department concentrates on decorations closer to the ground, like the stand-up Christmas trees in the park, nets of lights down Main Street and lights at busy intersections. The street department crew also helps control traffic when Light and Water employees use the bigger bucket trucks for the light poles on Oak Street and near the U.S. Highway 123 bypass.

Lacey said the Light and Water department does nothing but put up Christmas lights on those light poles for three days. The flashing sign on Highway 123 lets motorists know to stay in one lane so the crews can work.

The recreation department also decorates the gym inside the Shaver Complex for the city employees' Christmas party, which Lacey said

brings in about 350 to 400 people.

Lacey said people don't realize how much work goes into decorating the city. Just like the concerts in Ram Cat Alley, people see the end result of the work, not the behind-the-scenes efforts. But the city workers enjoy decorating nonetheless.

"All the city workers get along so well, and we're one big happy family putting up Christmas lights for city employees and getting everybody in the holiday mood," he said. "It's Christmastime, and who doesn't like to put up Christmas lights?"

Krabbe said all the city workers take a lot of pride in decorating the city, especially when workers drive by the park and see families looking at the lights and stand-up decorations. And although the workers don't do the job for compliments, they definitely don't mind them.

"They look forward to Christmas and lighting up the city and take pride in what the city looks like when they're done," Krabbe said. "A lot of the times you only hear complaints when something's wrong, like we didn't pick up a trash can. We like it when people enjoy the decorations."