

The spirit survives



Town's first Christmas lights contest emerges from canceled parade

BY LAUREN PIERCE
THE JOURNAL

SIX MILE — Christmas isn't canceled in Six Mile.

When the annual Christmas parade was shelved this year because of the COVID-19 pan-

demie, the town's parade committee moved forward with a Christmas lights contest instead.

People can drive along the contest route with a scavenger hunt provided

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Heath Hale holds his daughter, Arya, for a picture with Santa Claus on Monday in Six Mile.



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

LIGHTS: 'Brought out the Christmas spirit'

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by the committee. The weeklong event began Monday and runs through Friday.

The 62-minute, 32.6-mile contest route starts at Town Hall and ends on Maw Bridge Road.

Cullen Finley, co-chair of the parade committee, said 35 entries registered to be included on the route, with 33 of those registered to be judged. Contests include businesses, churches and homes. Care prizes will be awarded in five different categories — Griswold Christmas Spectacular, Classic Christmas: Tasteful and Traditional, Best Church, Most Unique and Brightest Business.

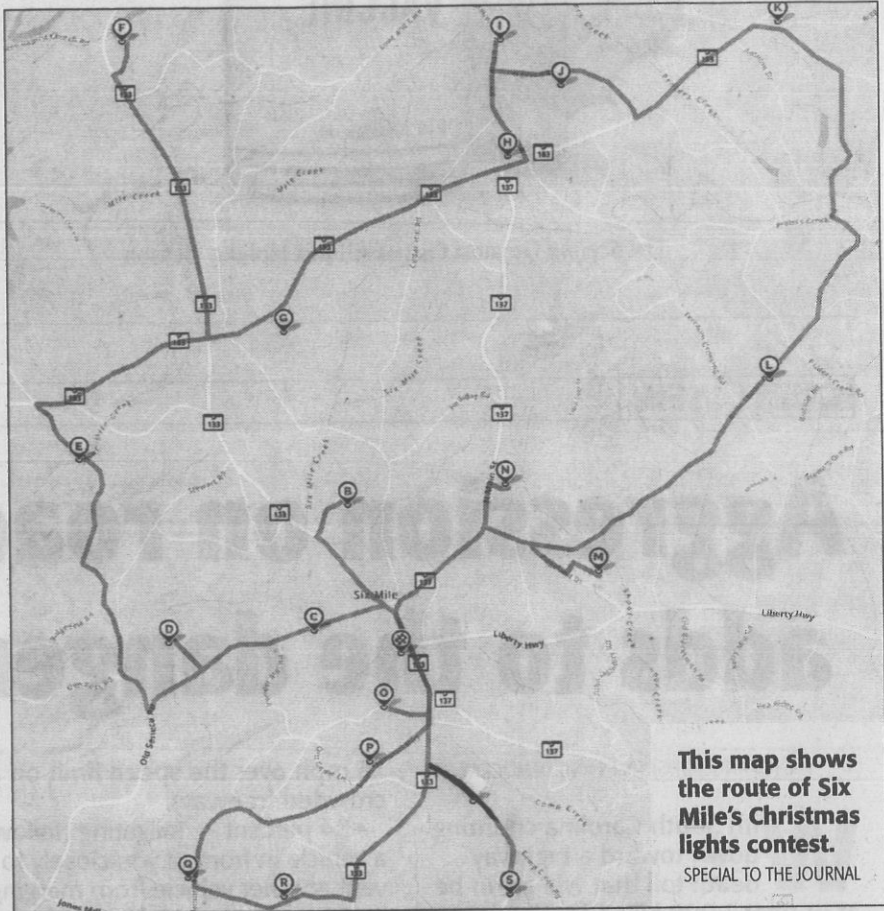
Judges include Finley, fellow parade committee co-chair Kayla Holtzclaw and two non-committee members. Judging for each category is happening each night through Friday night.

Holtzclaw said the committee wanted to create a "bright ending," adding residents were angry after the parade was canceled and "it had seemed like Six Mile had canceled Christmas."

"That was not true at all," Holtzclaw said. "We were working very hard behind the scenes to genuinely bring a different kind of Christmas magic to our town."

Judy Shaw said she and her family entered the contest because of the children, adding the joy she gets from watching their reactions to the lights and her singing Santa Claus and reindeer is "just priceless."

"Our family has always decorated for the holidays, and it seems our display grows every year," she said. "The contest has brought out the Christmas spirit in our small community. Although I know this cannot take the place of the Christmas parade — nor should it — this is a wonderful alternative."



This map shows the route of Six Mile's Christmas lights contest.

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The committee kicked off the week's festivities with Santa Claus making an appearance for photos. Finley said the event allows families to still see Santa and ride around town enjoying the light displays without pandemic concerns brought on by large gatherings.

"We are simply hoping to spread Christmas cheer to end such a dark year with some light," Finley said.

Tassy Mannis and her mother, Kathy Martin, were among those who drove around the town checking out the Christmas lights in the contest earlier this week.

"It was nice to get out of the house to go on a fun adventure with find-

ing the lights and participating in the scavenger hunt," Mannis said.

Holtzclaw said judges will travel the route multiple times throughout the week, noting details of each entry and using a number scale from 0-5. All winners will be notified personally and will be posted on social media.

"We hope to be given permission to continue this event alongside other Christmas events in the future and intend to develop a plan to present to the town council seeking to add this event to the town's budget," she said.