

2017 Interview with Klaus Gielisch, President Nature's Coast Holiday, Inc, a non-profit

1. How many hours before the event's actual set-up do you spend during the year on NCH?

We actually work on this all year long. Maybe not every day, but a significant portion of every month is devoted to one segment or another of the whole scheme.

2. What things do you do during the year before set-up?

We look for and reclaim/recycle any appropriate wire frame structures. Repair, repaint and restring with LED lights. Design new structures, supervise fabrication, paint and string with lights. Repair any pieces that have failed during the previous season that were unable to be addressed in the field.

We have bi-monthly meetings with the NCH Board to do planning and make decisions.

Look for new sponsors and volunteer groups.

Order new lights and supplies.

Send Mailers to current sponsors.

3. How many hours does it take to set-up?

Depends on how many people show up to help. We start the first Saturday in November at 9am, till about 2 or 3pm. Lunch is provided the first weekend. We continue next weekend, and subsequent weekends until majority of lights are in place. During the week, us retired folks continue to decorate as weather, time and senior energy permits.

4. How many people does it take to set-up?

Core group of about 10 to organize and lead individuals and groups that show up. We like to see about 80 to 100 people. That doesn't always happen. When we say we need people to help, we really do and hope for the best.

5. How do you get people to help?

Beg, plead, bribe. No, we depend on the volunteer spirit of folks.

6. You have some unique pieces. Where did the octopus, mermaid, seahorse come from? Handmade? Recycled?

This is before my time, but as I understand it, the octopus, mermaid, seahorse, elk family, and eagle were handmade by a public works employee (Bob Schaefer).

The shark, polar bear, glass and wine bottle, moth/butterfly/locust, flowers and birds were made by the high school welding class.

The lobster trap that you see in The Deep, (the black light area) was originally imported from Maine on one of our cross country trips.

Because of complexity and cost, the Avenue of the Arches has taken 3 years to complete.

One of our committee board members is a professional welder and has fabricated the Santa sled, 5 Golden Rings and the Avenue of the Arches.

A personal friend made the penguin leaping off the igloo piece.

7. How many sculpture pieces do you have?

There are 200 pieces, give or take.

8. How many lights?

1/2 million! We like to say "if you can count them, we don't have enough"

9. How long to take down?

The majority of the lights come down in one morning. The bigger pieces are picked up and placed in storage in one day.

10. You say this is the best light show on the south coast. What makes it the best?

Other than it being the only one, it's unique in that it's a walk-through experience. There is Christmas music playing throughout the park. Refreshments are offered. This year we introduced a snow machine. Santa and Mrs. Claus drop in from the North Pole on several evenings. If you're on the nice list, you get a candy cane. Elsa and Olaf are new this year and will greet the young and old with Snow Kisses. Occasionally carolers can be found strolling through the park. Face painters and balloon artists also show up now and then. There is also a wide variety of sculptures and a more free-form approach to the light stringing.

11. Why do you do this each year?

Being retired, this keeps us off the couch during the day. Also keeps our hands and brains occupied with more productive activity other than video games and watching DOOL (Days or our Lives). and not to sound overly ultraistic, it feels good to give back.