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TOP STORY

Christmas on the Vista to celebrate the season

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Hannah Johnson and 1 year-old daughter Ember explore one of the lit trees in Vista Park last week in Warren. There will be an event in Vista Park celebrating the effort on December 10.

MARK LEVY HERALD/REVIEW

BISBEE — If you live in Bisbee and are looking for a close to home night ride to see holiday decorations, look no further than Warren which for the first time will be the site of Christmas on the Vista, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 10.

The trees around Vista Park have been decorated with hundreds of tiny twinkling lights to help Santa find his way to deliver presents to the children of Bisbee, said Heather Glenn in an email.

The event was inspired by the discovery of a memorial plaque donated by the family of Maya Jasmine Douglas who passed away at the tender age of six as she succumbed to an autoimmune disorder in 2013. The child spent the last 30 months of her life in and out of Phoenix Children's Hospital and the family utilized the Ronald McDonald House during her illness, according to Maya's nana, Wanda Leikem. Each year, the family holds a toy drive and donates them to the hospital and the Ronald McDonald House on Maya's birthday, May 10. Maya's artwork was used to decorate the fliers for the toy drive.

The plaque was found by Rachael Allee, who always wanted to get the holiday spirit going in Warren with a community-wide decorating contest, as she began to catalogue all the trees in the park for the holiday gestures to honor those who have passed away by lighting each trunk with festive solar lights. She and Heather Glenn reached out to the Warren community and it was not long before she had donors for the 69 trees they planned to light.

Maya was in the hospital a lot during the holidays, but one favorite memory Leikem has is of Maya wearing her lighted, blinking Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer nose.

To further honor Maya, there will be a limited number of red-nosed reindeer kits containing antlers and a blinking nose for \$10, which will go to the Ronald McDonald House where her parents frequently spent nights as she underwent treatment.

A choir will perform "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" at the holiday event in Maya's honor with more carols continuing during the day.

People are encouraged to bring a new unboxed toy for the toy drive.

Glenn said the afternoon will be filled with activities, entertainment and, of course, craft and food vendors.

It is not just Vista Park that will be lit up. Many homes around Vista Park will be participating in a House Decorating Contest with prizes for 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place, said Glenn. Those who attend will also be able to vote for their home or business favorite by phone beginning Dec. 1 or Dec. 8. Winners will be announced at the event on the 10th.

The trees will remain lit each night from Thanksgiving to New Year's day.



Christmas on the Vista Chair Rachel Allee checks out one of the 69 trees lit by solar power in Warren. Several individuals & businesses are sponsoring the endeavor.

"The tree sponsorship project has revealed some very personal stories and brought family members together as they dedicate trees remembering loved ones now gone," said Glenn.

As they began decorating the trees, with some help from the city, people in the area asked about the event and it was not long before they had enough sponsors for the 69 trees while listening to the memories shared by those who lost someone very dear to them.

Warren resident Deb Mackey heard about sponsoring a tree for Christmas on the Vista and contacted Allee to pick out a special tree to honor her friend Rosie Garcia, who grew up in Bisbee. After surviving breast cancer, Rosie succumbed to brain cancer in August 2021, continued Glenn.

"After Deb told Rosie's daughter Melissa about the tree, she was so touched by the gesture that she gathered her three children, Bella, Teeny and Romeo, and drove to Vista Park to find it," she explained. "The four of them went from tree to tree in search of the memorial gift in Rosie's name."

Allee was in the park testing lights when she noticed the group and asked if she could help them. She took them to the tree they were looking for and even lit the lights so the family members could take a photo by their tree.

As Allee worked on getting the lights up, she engaged with her greater community members as they walked their dogs, drove by or simply visited the park. Many shared their own stories about Vista Park.

One quiet evening while Allee was testing lights, she watched a soccer coach take his son by the hand after practice to walk around each lighted tree one by one in the twilight.

The lower end of Vista Park is displaying 69 solar lit trees as they light up the Vista.



"It was a tender gesture between father and son that left a lasting impression on Allee," said Glenn.

Visit www.HistoricWarrenCommunity.org for more details.

If you live on the Vista and want to enter the contest or organize a contest in another neighborhood, contact BisbeesChristmasOnTheVista@gmail.com for details.

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