

## Randolph Man Lights Up the Town, Wins Contest

By Henry M. Holden.

Stephen Perkowski has been lighting up his section of Randolph for 31 years. His efforts resulted in him winning the Second Annual Randolph Township Holiday Decorating Contest, sponsored by the Kiwanis Club.

Perkowski's house, at 9 Leigh Ct., won the "Biggest and Brightest" Award for 2017.

"It was a gradual buildup over the years," Perkowski said. "We planted the first tree when we moved in. We gradually added trees and we got some from my neighbor."

Lighting the holiday trees has been a Perkowski fami-

ly tradition for more than 50 years.

"My father started me on this," he says. "When I was about eight years old, my father got strings of lights and my brothers and I sorted the bulbs and got them ready for him. He used a 20-foot furring strip with a nail in it to hang lights on the tree we had outside our home. We had one tall tree, about 20-feet, that we decorated for many years when we lived in Elmhurst, N.Y. The tree unfortunately got a disease and died. We then decorated Yews and other bushes.

Last year was the first year of the contest and Perkowski

did not know about it until after it was over, and he heard about the winners.

"This has been a family operation from the beginning," Perkowski said. "The four of us do a lot pruning over the weekend preceding the lighting. My son does a lot of the lift work and my youngest daughter helps me and my wife. I have a second daughter who lives in Florida. I used to use a 40-foot pole, but the trees have grown out of my reach. The tallest tree is about 45-feet. We've been renting a lift for the past five years. The lift helps me swirl light strings around the trees filling in all the gaps something I don't see anyone else doing exactly that way."

The Randolph Kiwanis Club

offered a \$200 gift to the winners, but they specify in their application that it must be a youth charity.

"The \$200 donation went to New City Kids," he said. My son Peter volunteered with Servants Heart a 501(c3) organization that renovated a building in a facility to be occupied by New City Kids, in Jersey City. That is how he got to know the organization."

Perkowski has no plans on entering the contest again next year.

"The winners are not allowed to enter again the following year," Perkowski said. "Another part of the agreement is that I will help judge next year's contest. The peo-

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ple who won last year had a huge display, something like 30,000 lights, so I didn't have to compete with them this year. My 8,000 plus lights were enough to win.

"One of the main reasons I wanted to enter the contest was to share it with others," he says. Since we won the contest I

noticed there is an increase in traffic down our street. Over the years, we always had people driving down the street looking at our display, but we have gotten more traffic since we won the contest. We are not on the main drag, so people really must look for us if they want to see the display."