

Town Traditions

Holiday Lights: A Labor of Love

by Mary Sheeley
Holiday Lights Committee Co-Chair

For the past ten years, the *Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce* and *The Noonday Club* have worked together to purchase, maintain, and hang the beautiful holiday lights that grace our area during the holiday season.

During the hot summer months, when most people are planning picnics and barbecues, this intrepid group is planning for the following winter season, making necessary repairs to the ornaments and ordering replacements where needed. Each year, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, we meet to check and replace light bulbs and get the ornaments ready for the volunteers who will hang them the next day. The effort takes approximately 122 person-hours over the two-day period.

We thought you would enjoy learning a little of the history surrounding our tradition and how the project grew from 1992 until the present. At a *Noonday Club* meeting in April or May 1992, the late Stanley Kaplan lamented about the sorry condition of the lights that adorned the streets of the Village of Ellenville each holiday season. The ornaments were in a poor state and there was no set time to put them up and take them down; at best, it was a haphazard affair. Stan challenged the Club to take on this task and so the joint committee was born. From its inception, the committee has been co-chaired by Fran Wolfe (representing *The Noonday*


Club) and Mary Sheeley (representing *The Chamber of Commerce*).

The first year, we successfully raised over \$13,000 to purchase 25 star ornaments and 25 wreaths. Each year after that, additional ornaments were added and the program extended into the hamlets of Napanoch, Kerhonkson, and, the newest addition, Wawarsing. Today, we have over 100 ornaments and approximately 30 banners that are stored on the third floor of **Wawarsing Town Hall**.

This year, the committee determined some of the ornaments would need to be replaced. The normal life expectancy of the ornaments is 5 to 7 years. With the oldest ornaments turning 10 this season, we are well beyond the expected life. A 5-year replacement plan was begun, so this year you will see 22 new ornaments joining our traditional wreaths and snowflakes. The ornaments were specially produced for us and we hope you like them.

From its inception, this project has been a labor of love for the many volunteers who change light bulbs, check wiring, and brave the elements to hang and remove the ornaments. We hope that you get as much enjoyment out of seeing them as we do out of tending to them.

We truly feel that our decorations are second-to-none, and many communities have been inspired to follow our lead; today, you can see wreaths and snowflakes from Wurtsboro to Marbletown.

The ornaments will be up Saturday, November 30th through the holidays. So, plan to ride through Ellenville, Napanoch, Wawarsing, and Kerhonkson that weekend, after dark, and enjoy the sight. 

Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce
PO Box 227 • Ellenville NY 12428 • (845) 647-4620

Membership Application/Renewal

Business/Org Name: _____

Contact Person, or Individual Membership Name:

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Brief Description of Business: _____

Membership Fee Structure, Annual Dues

All Business Memberships: **\$50**, January – December
Personal Memberships (no business affiliation): **\$25**
Not-for-Profit Memberships: **\$25**

New Membership **Renewal**

Large Business *Small Business*

Non-for-Profit *Personal*

Please return this form to the Chamber with a check.
Not-for-Profits must include tax-exemption certificate.
Membership is for Calendar Year (Jan – Dec only).

Please check committees that best reflect your interests and on which you'd be willing to serve:

Membership Holiday Decorations Brochures
Publicity/Public Relations Ellenville Day
Finance New Business Advisory Tourism
Business District Beautification Wawarsing.Net

Other Interests/Talents: _____