

As you read this message, it is likely that you have visited Making Spirits Bright at least once. Thank you for sharing our joy with Christmas as we once again bring you this much anticipated holiday lights show. Your encouraging compliments and multiple visits are two of the reasons our dedicated volunteers are excited about continuing to provide this event.

We have grown exponentially over these twelve years, so we needed more warehouse room, or as we call it, workshop space, since we are some of Santa's elves. Thankfully, the Sheboygan Humane Society, who is our landlord, had more space to provide right next door. A little deconstruction and construction gave us a pass through from one section to the other. Our very organized shop manager, John Muehlbauer and others on the Production Committee rearranged everything to utilize the space in the best possible manner.

A few new displays again this year include a mega star and a jolly hippopotamus inspired from the age-old children's song *I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas*. The star boasts about 2856 KGB LED lights which will brighten up its new home in the park. Other additions continue to contribute to the ambiance among the trees and roadways.

As we round out our twelfth year, I will be stepping down as the Steering Committee Chair gradually fading out over the course of time in 2024. I will remain as the Fund-Raising Chair but will turn the remainder of duties over to David Hoffmann who is known by many of you. He has long time experience in both the business and non-profit world and will be a great successor to this position. I trust he will be shown the same love and respect that has been demonstrated to me over the years.

There aren't adequate words to thank all who have worked so diligently with me since 2010 when this concept was but an idea brought back from a Rotary District Conference by Judy Slawny and myself. It became a reality in 2012 and has become more than we could ever have imagined. I have so appreciated all of our dedicated committee volunteers, many of whom have been involved since 2012. We wouldn't be continuing year after year without the visitors who frequent the park with their pantry and monetary donations. I would also like to thank so many in Sheboygan County for their confidence with financial and volunteer support. The City of Sheboygan Public Works made the event possible by extending the use of Evergreen Park which offers such a unique venue for the lights display. Our partnership with Sheboygan County Food Bank has been rewarding beyond words and with the addition of the annual 5K Holiday Lights Run/Walk has afforded them increased benefits. Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to thank all of our families who have supported our efforts, supporting the time required to bring this special event to fruition annually.

It has been a gratifying, rewarding experience and I look forward to what is ahead with new leadership.

Cordially,

Gerry Plehn