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A Tradition of Holiday Cheer

By Cristina Kim



Photos Doug Kohen

Seventeen years ago Dave and Lynne McGraw met Steve and Martha McLaren. The couples became friends and began a grand tradition of decorating their Moraga homes for Christmas. When they first started collaborating on decorations neither couple could predict that they would become part of the fabric of their community's holiday festivities.

Over the years the McGraw and McLaren homes have become locally famous for their elaborate decorations, which draw a crowd of spectators. Both couples agree that while they started decorating their homes to bring cheer to their families, they continue to do it for all the people who walk or drive by every night to see the display.

To celebrate the community and recognize those who come by to admire the lights, the McLarens and McGraws added a tree lighting ceremony. Open to the public, the event occurs every first Saturday after Thanksgiving and revolves around the lighting of the Douglas fir tree that graces the McGraws' front yard. Dave McGraw believes the event helps everyone get into the holiday spirit and provides a place for people to "enjoy an evening in a small town community."

This year many Lamorinda residents came to enjoy the tree lighting and sip complimentary hot cocoa and wine. The mood was decidedly festive and reflected the holiday cheer and generosity that is often lost amid the stress of holiday shopping. People yelled "Merry Christmas!" as the lights came on and everyone cheered for the beautiful tree. "It came on again. PG&E loves us again," joked Steve McLaren.

Minh Huebner, who recently moved to Moraga, said, "I think it is awesome to have this in our neighborhood. It really brings the holiday cheer." Lynne McGraw explained, "We do it for the love of other people." The couples' generosity and goodwill shines through all the decorations and warms the heart on even the chilliest of nights.

If you missed the lighting ceremony but still want to take a peek, simply drive or walk down to Lynwood Drive in Moraga.



Martha and Steve McLaren



Lynne and Dave McGraw

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