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NEWS

# Burbank residents celebrate 50 years of Christmas decorations outside their home



Pamela and Richard Norton stand in front of their yard that features an elaborate Christmas display on North Florence Street in Burbank on Thursday. This is the 50th year

the Nortons have decorated their home, complete with various animated displays, a scavenger hunt, a Santa sign-in book and a live web stream from the front and back of their holiday creation. (Tim Berger/Burbank Leader)

By ANTHONY CLARK CARPIO

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What started as a fun family holiday tradition has evolved into five decades of bringing Christmas cheer to visitors near and far.

This holiday season marks the 50th year that Dick and Pam Norton have decorated their house and front lawn in the 500 block of North Florence Street with yards of strung lights, numerous stuffed animals and elaborate, handmade displays — which include a carousel, Ferris wheel and a train.

While the Nortons said the past 50 Christmases have sometimes been a blur for them, they said the physical aches and pains they deal with remind them it's been 50 years of hard work.

Last Thursday night, the Nortons powered up their decorations, which can easily be seen from Verdugo Avenue.

Though the weather was chilly, families gazed at the Nortons' house in wonderment and shouted out the names of the various stuffed animals and characters they recognized as they scanned through the densely populated lawn.

"It's very rewarding, the feeling that you get when you see these people and they thank you for doing this," Pam Norton said.

"It's a labor of love. There's no question about it," Dick Norton added. "There's a lot of hours that go into putting this thing together."

The lights and animatronics are active from about 6 to 9 p.m. each night, barring bad weather.



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Dick Norton said his family has been fortunate over the past few years that there's seldom been any rain during the holidays.

The decorations had to be covered once last year due to rain, but Dick Norton said there has been more precipitation this season.

"The display will be up through Dec. 27, assuming the rain doesn't take us out," he said. "If rain is in the forecast for the night, we'll cover [the display]."

The decorations on the Nortons' house have gone through different iterations throughout the years.

There was one point when Dick Norton decided to sell all of the mechanical displays he'd made and switch over to using electronic displays, which involve more lighting, on the lawn.

That lasted for about four years, but he said he missed having all of his animatronics, and he ended up buying back most of his decorations from the families to whom he had sold them.

As people continued to stop by their house to check out the decorations, the Nortons were given a surprise of their own this year.

Neighbors Brandy Coplan and Jaclyn Morse gave the Nortons a cake decorated to look like their house with all of its Christmas decorations.

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Coplan, Morse and their families moved into the neighborhood about three years ago. They said their families, especially their children, have admired the impressive display put on by the Nortons each year.

Morse said she first learned about the Nortons' Christmas decorations from the real estate disclosures when her family purchased their house.

"Every day, we come home, our kid runs out and checks out their house," Morse said.

She added that she appreciates the detail that goes into the display, especially the fact that the Nortons change the location of each stuffed animal every night.

Coplan, who lives in the house right next to the Nortons, said her neighbors have set the bar when it comes to amazing Christmas decorations.

"Living next to them has definitely upped the ante," Coplan said.

With 50 years now in the books, Dick Norton said he, his wife as well as their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will continue to put up their decorations until they can no longer do so.

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**NEWS**



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Anthony Clark Carpio is a reporter with the Burbank Leader. He joined the Times Community News staff on New Year's Eve 2012 and covers everything from the City Council to community events. He has a journalism degree from Cal State Northridge. Before reporting in Burbank, he was a reporter with the Huntington Beach Independent and a freelance reporter for the Pasadena Sun, the La Cañada Valley Sun and the Santa Clarita Signal.

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