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These 5 R.I. homeowners give the gift of light -- and lots of it -- at Christmas / Photos

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The display at Evertt Lewis's Warwick home uses 47,000 lights.

/Everett Lewis

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Maybe it starts out slowly — a string of lights here, a plastic reindeer there.

Next thing you know, you're putting in new circuit breakers, writing computer programs and begging folks not to block neighbors' driveways. On Dec. 26, you're scouring stores for Christmas bargains, already thinking about next year's display.

You may have OCHLD — obsessive-compulsive holiday light disorder.

But one person's disorder is another's delight. It might be high tech, with LED lighting and synchronized music. It might be old school, with plastic figurines from the '70s and '80s. You could even use a combination of both.

Here's a sampling of houses that light up the December night. (Yes, we know this is not all of them.) Think of these as landing beacons for Santa Claus.

69 Outlook Ave., East Providence

Marsha Giroux said her husband, Brian, is the mastermind behind this pretty display.

"My husband began about eight years ago. It started out very small, and then got quite extreme," she said.

She said the display uses mostly LED lights, which change color and are synchronized to Christmas music broadcast to car radios at 94.9 FM. There's even a Facebook page, under Giroux Family Christmas Display.

"We love Christmas, we have small kids, and we like sharing the holidays with them," Giroux said, adding that kids in the neighborhood love the display, too.

The Giroux family warms up with a Halloween display, although it's not as elaborate as the annual Christmas extravaganza. And once the Christmas display is up, she said, they're already thinking about next year.

The Giroux display stays up until Jan. 8 — which happens to be their wedding anniversary — and then comes down until the holiday season rolls around again.

7 Sneecech Pond Rd., Cumberland

Phil Silva said Christmas lights are a family tradition — his grandfather did it, his father did it, and he does it. And now his own son is helping out.

“I do it because my kids love it. And the neighborhood loves it. I get asked all the time what’s going to be next — it gets bigger every year,” he said. “I look forward to it. I love doing it.”

Silva said his wife’s all for it, too.

“It’s not like she’s saying, ‘Don’t do it’ he said. She’s saying ‘Do it! Do it!’”

Silva’s house is at the top of a hill, and he tends to put religious images, such as a crèche, at the bottom and the secular material at the top, closer to the house.

Silva makes some of the décor himself — like a big “Merry Christmas” sign — cutting the letters out of wood and attaching the lights.

All this illumination, Silva said, is not free.

“It pumps up the electric bill by a few hundred dollars,” he said. “I write it off as a Christmas present to myself.”

265 Maple Valley Rd., Coventry

Coventry’s Christmas display maestros Joe Conway and Tyler Horrocks joined forces this year to create “The Crazy Christmas Extravaganza,” which fully lives up to its name.

It also has a Facebook page, under “The Crazy Christmas House.”

With more than 100,000 lights, a walking path and a 30-foot-tall castle inspired by “Frozen,” the display is so elaborate that Conway and Horrocks were recently contestants on a national TV show, ABC’s “The Great Christmas Light Fight.” (Alas, they didn’t win.)

The property has a 300-foot walking path that takes viewers through displays inspired by “Frozen,” “The Nightmare Before Christmas,” “A Charlie Brown Christmas” and more.

“We do it because the people love it,” Conway said. “It’s a blast. We love doing it.” There’s also a charitable component — through the display, they raise money for The Tomorrow Fund, to benefit families of children with cancer, and collect food for the Coventry Food Bank.

Conway said they think about Christmas pretty much all year.

“Once January rolls around, the wheels are already turning,” he said. They check yard sales and Craigslist for supplies, and last February drove to New Hampshire to buy 30,000 lights “for an amazing low price.”

1246 Putnam Pike, Gloucester

Linda Saran and her husband, Ronnie, love the holidays. (They have eight Christmas trees inside their house.)

Outside, the house, yard and adjacent barn are covered with as many lights and Christmas decorations as they can find.

“I’m a 45-year-old child when it comes to the holidays,” Linda Saran said. “My very first apartment, when I was 18, I couldn’t wait to put up a strand of Christmas lights. And I’m still doing it.”

Saran said she’s always looking for new Christmas goodies because she doesn’t want people to drive by the house and see the same thing they saw last year. If someone has broken or abandoned Santas or reindeer, she’ll try to refurbish them. She’ll buy on eBay, or check the sales right after Christmas.

Once she found a white Christmas tree in someone’s trash.

“I’ve gotten cards left in the mailbox telling me how much they like the house,” she said.

The Sarans love Halloween, too, and every October there’s a big Halloween display in shades of purple, orange and green.

“As soon as the Halloween display comes down, Christmas pretty much starts going up,” she said.

12 Shenandoah Rd., Warwick

This one’s a high-tech marvel, with lights constantly moving and changing colors to Christmas music broadcast at 106.9 FM.

There’s a website at lewischristmas.com. And, by going to vote.lewischristmas.com, you can use your smartphone to not only see what songs are playing, but vote for your favorite and move it up the list.

Everett Lewis said the display, which started in 1996, is designed by his five children.

“We enjoy it as a family. It’s just a great part of the holiday season,” he said, estimating the display uses 47,000 lights and takes from Halloween to Thanksgiving to install.

The show is also designed to benefit charity, specifically Westbay Community Action. There's a donation box on the property, and the "radio station" encourages donations.

The Lewis family is expecting a visit from Santa tomorrow from 6:30 to 8 p.m., weather permitting.

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