

# House decorators win big in Kingston Twp. contest

By REBECCA BRIA  
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Rick and Lois Connors had an off year for decorating. Exhausted after a wedding and a graduation for their children, Lois asked her husband to go easy with the decorating this year.

Rick did go easy, but still did enough for the Connors' home to be selected a winner in the 2007 Kingston Township Holiday House Decorating Contest.

"It's exciting, but my husband does all the decorating," Lois said. "He really gets into it; he really loves it. I'm kind of shocked because we really didn't have all of our decorations up this year."

The 2007 Kingston Township Holiday House Decorating Contest was held beginning at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 12. Judges visited the six homes that were entered into the contest. They also drove around the township looking for other nicely-decorated and festive homes. Each winning household received a \$50 gift certificate to Lowe's Home Improvement Center.

The holiday decorating contest is sponsored by the Kingston Township Recreation Board and has been in existence for at least eight years.

This year's winners are: Ann Rushinski, 20 Division St., Shavertown; Rick and Lois Connors, 205 Bunker Hill Rd., Kingston Twp.; Anthony and Suzanne Caravaggio, 144 North Pioneer Ave., Shavertown; and Donald and Aimee Austin, 235 Carverton Rd., Trucksville.

Rick and Lois Connors, along with Lois' daughter, Amanda Brooks, live at a winning house on Bunker Hill Road. They were entered into the contest by the Connors' daughter-in-law, Denise Connors.

It took Rick about two days to fully decorate the outside of the family home. He outlined the entire roof, sides of the house and porch with lights; placed an inflatable 12-foot snowman and globe in the front yard; and put up other decorations. Lois helped decorate the porch by hanging wreaths and bows.

Lois says their neighbors jokingly make fun of them for decorating so much for every holiday but the neighbors and passersby think the house looks nice. Of course, the process always hasn't been so smooth.

"When we first started doing it, we kept blowing all our circuits," Lois said. "He (Rick) had to learn where to plug everything in. We'd go, 'Oh my God, we blew another circuit.' But he's got it down pat now."

Though she is unsure of exactly how they will spend their \$50 at Lowe's, Lois keeps kidding Rick about buying more lights and decorations.

Donald and Aimee Austin, along with their children, 4-year-old Brendon and 19-month-old Brooke, live on Carverton Road, in another of the winning houses.

"We were surprised," Aimee said, admitting she doesn't know who entered her family in the contest. "We weren't expecting it at all.



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Does your back yard look like this? This yard is a winning design for Ann Rushinski and Rich Holthaus in the Kingston Township House Decorating Contest.



Anthony and Suzanne Caravaggio, along with their children Tony, Michael and Gabrielle, in front of their home in Shavertown, a winner in the Kingston Township House Decorating Contest.



Rick Connors dusts snow off his house decoration on Bunker Hill Road, an award-winning entry in the Kingston Township House Decorating Contest.

We were putting the kids to bed and the dogs started barking and we found out what happened."

The family started decorating about three days before Thanksgiving and gradually put up things up until they finished on Thanksgiving Day. The front of the house and roof are framed with multi-colored lights. Lighted spiral trees, candy canes, snowflakes and deer line the yard. Aimee says they have something new every year.

Brendon helped his dad by untangling cords and placing things where his father told him to but it was cold on decorating day and the youngster kept knocking on the door to go in the house.

The Austins say they will probably spend their \$50 prize on more decorations.

Ann Rushinski and her partner Rich Holthaus decorated their

home on Division Street extravagantly and won the contest.

"I am kind of shocked, but I work hard every year and I've never entered a contest before," Rushinski said. "Everyone keeps telling me I should because I put a lot of work in my house." Rushinski began decorating the Monday after Thanksgiving and spent two weeks to complete the masterpiece. Her property is covered with candy canes, Santa, reindeer, inflatable items, lights, and more.

"I decorate for every single holiday," she said. "And if there's no holiday, in the summertime I'm decorated with pink flamingoes."

Rushinski wants to use her gift card after Christmas to buy discounted decorations. She says she always buys her decorations at an end-of-season sale, but recently risked rainy and icy roads to purchase a 3-foot Charlie Brown at a midnight sale at Ollie's Discount Outlet.

Like the Connors family, Rushinski says it took time to figure out the electrical set up.

"I bought another blow up and I wanted to put that up," she laughed. "Every time we hooked a blow-up up, we blew a fuse...we were blowing fuses for three days straight. I think the electric company loves me. My family says when they're coming in from Florida, the plane wants to veer toward my house."

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