



Lighting the way



Lawrenceville man controls home display via the Web

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As the sun sets, Joey Smith stands on a ladder, making an adjustment to the wreath hanging in the second-story window. From inside the house, his wife, Julie, helps him get the placement of the wreath just right.

The wreath, which is wrapped in lights, is only one small part of the Smiths' holiday display at their Lawrenceville home. There are about 13,000 lights on the house, Joey Smith said.

Once it gets dark, the Smiths' lights do more than just shine brightly. Every half an hour, an automated light show set to music begins. Visitors can hear the songs via a low-powered radio transmitter broadcast in the area just outside the Smiths' home. The signal can be picked up on 89.7 FM.

Lights blink on and off to the music during the 10-minute light show. It features four songs, including three tunes by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra and an arrangement of "Jingle Bells."

In addition to carefully

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Top, Joey Smith shows off the 13,000-light display he created for the holidays. On his Web site at www.holidayautomation.com, users can click on a particular part of the house to switch the lights in that section on or off. Above, lights blink to music during the 10-minute light show, which features four songs.

Staff Photos: Christopher North

Lights: 'People don't know what you can do with the Web'

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choreographing the light show, Smith maintains a Web site for his holiday lights. It can be seen online at www.holidayautomation.com.

On the site, users can click on a particular part of the house to switch the lights in that section on or off. Virtual visitors can see the results of their actions on the site's live video feed, which updates every two seconds.

"A lot of people don't know what you can do with the Web. Turning Christmas lights on and off is something they can relate to," Smith said.

People from around the world have visited Smith's Web site. He keeps track of all his online visitors.

"It's kind of neat to see other people are watching it," Smith said.

The Web site doesn't update quickly enough to show the musical light show as it happens, but Smith has posted videos of it on YouTube. These videos can also be seen on his Web site.

The holiday light projects have become a time-consuming hobby for Smith, who owns his own home automation company and works in information technology. Programming 60 seconds of

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Did you know?

■ In 1882, three years after Thomas Edison invented the incandescent bulb, Edward Johnson, hand-wired 80 red, white and blue bulbs on an evergreen tree in his home. Johnson was vice president of Edison's light company.

■ In 1895, President Grover Cleveland commissioned a tree for the White House that was lighted with Edison bulbs.

■ In the early 1900s, members of high society would host parties to show off their lighted Christmas trees, which costs around \$300 (more than \$2,000 in today's dollars).

■ After World War II, electric Christmas lights became popular across the United States as electricity was brought to rural areas in the 1940s.

Source: The National Electrical Contractors Association at www.necanet.org

lights to music takes him at least three hours, not to mention the time spent actually hanging lights and maintaining the Web site.

Though Smith is still tweaking this season's lights, he's already planning to make next year's display bigger and better.

"What I really want to do is work with my neighbor. We want to do dueling houses," Smith said.



Staff Photo: Christopher North

A strand of lights sits on the driveway wall along Joey Smith's home. Smith followed up a Halloween show with a Christmas light show set to music.