

January 2021

## **Merry and Bright: Saint Peter's School (Safely) Shares Christmas Cheer**

*By Nancy Hopkins*

What can a school do when the traditional school Christmas program, classroom celebrations and caroling are cancelled? The Saint Peter's Home and School Executive Board thought of a new way to share joy, light, and community, by organizing a "Christmas Lights Tour."

The idea for the tour came from parent Christina Shioutakon, modeled after her family's own tradition. "One of our favorite holiday traditions is driving our children around and looking at Christmas lights. We thought it would be fun to share this with the school community and to get people excited, we decided to add in a competition element," said Shioutakon.



Interested families registered their homes to be included on the tour; then set to stringing lights, hanging wreaths, and inflating characters. Event planners created and shared routes of participating homes. The full route included 40 homes, a 72-mile journey estimated to take approximately 3 hours and 45 minutes. Homes were also divided up into a northern and southern route for those that could not complete the full journey.



On Friday, December 18, families were encouraged to pile into their cars, turn up the Christmas music, and follow the roadmap of homes included in the tour. A Christmas Joy sign was included in each home's display to confirm the correct house was being viewed amidst many neighbors also decorated for the season. Families were asked to vote for their favorite displays on one or both routes and top winners from each route were selected for a cash prize.

"The Christmas light tour was something my family wanted to join the moment it was announced. Expanding our home's decorations to help provide cheer to the community was something that lifted our hearts," said Elizabeth McAndrew-Benavides. "Taking the tour and seeing everyone else's displays was also so much fun. We drank hot cocoa and listened to

holiday music while seeking out the houses. I even shared the list with neighbors who did the tour on their own.” The event is sure to become a new school tradition.

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