

Shining bright through the holidays

Rambadt Park to light up the night



Reed City will open its Festival of Lights at Rambadt Memorial Park on Saturday.

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REED CITY — Reed City will open its Festival of Lights at Rambadt Memorial Park on Saturday, marking the start of a month long community display that organizers say they hope will grow into a larger seasonal tradition.

The kickoff begins at 6 p.m. at 700 N. Park St. with holiday activities, followed by the lighting of the displays at 7 p.m.

The event is organized by Crossroads Recreation Connection along with Stephanie Boyce and Donnie James Dwyer V. Boyce, the group's secretary, said the project reflects a broader effort to create opportunities for residents to gather and spend time outdoors.

"It's community involvement," Boyce said adding that the organization looks for ways to bring people together in settings where they can engage with one another.

Volunteers, businesses and community groups have created about 18 displays throughout the park.

The exhibits include contributions from local organizations such as the wrestling team, the theater and the museum. Visitors will be able to view the lights by driving the park loop or walking a designated path.

The displays will remain lit each night through the season from 5:45 to 9:45. Boyce said the variety of contributors reflects interest from across the community and a shared effort to establish a recurring event.

The Festival of Lights grew out of early conversations about creating a lantern walk connecting Rambadt Memorial Park with Westberg Park along the Purple Heart Trail.

Boyce said the idea is still being developed and remains part of the group's long-term vision.

"This is a vision that just started in October and is totally at the ground floor right now," Boyce said.

She said organizers hope to eventually link the parks through a combination of lanterns and lighted displays that guide visitors along the trail.

The kickoff event is expected to draw families and residents seeking a seasonal gathering.

Attendees will find a hot dog roast, children's crafts under the pavilion and a group of storytellers reading holiday books from the stage.

A choir assembled for the event plans to lead Christmas caroling, and Santa will make an appearance.

Boyce said events like the Festival of Lights help build a sense of connection in communities where people may not often interact outside daily routines.

"It brings us out," Boyce said. She said gatherings provide chances for residents to meet one another and form relationships beyond brief encounters around town.

Volunteers have prepared the displays in recent days, and an electrician offered his time to ensure the lighting can be activated safely during the event.

Organizers plan to use a ceremonial switch for the 7 p.m. lighting.

Boyce said the group views the festival as the beginning of a larger effort to create seasonal programming that encourages residents to participate in community life.

She said organizers expect to expand offerings in the coming year as more volunteers and groups get involved.

"We just can't wait to see how big it gets," Boyce said.