



**BRIGHT IDEA** — Kevin Kolak's annual Christmas light show, which adorns his residence in Elliottsburg, has begun its holiday run. Donations are being accepted for the benefit of Deven Jackson, a young boy who lost his legs to meningitis.

## Elliottsburg man hopes to light up child's holidays

♦ By SEAN SAURO  
Staff Writer

Falling leaves and pumpkin patches may seem a distant memory after a Nov. 26 storm blanketed the county in white. Already, many residents are showing their Christmas spirit by stringing their properties in vibrant lights.

Among the droves of decorators, one may stand out. Elliottsburg resident Kevin Kolak spent six weeks, working nights and weekends, to place more than 100,000 lights.

Kolak was interested in

electronics when he was in high school, and a neighbor's light display piqued his interest. "I said, 'I'm going to have something like that one day.'"

His ambition was postponed until his children graduated college. "You keep putting it off and putting it off."

Kolak was 58 when he started his light project. "The next thing I knew, I was putting things together. I built them all. I didn't buy anything."

Two years later, Kolak had constructed a 100,000-light

display. It now draws quite a crowd throughout the holiday season.

It's not only the number of lights that attracts people. "I want my lights to do something," Kolak said. "I don't want turn them on and just have them sit there."

The lights are programmed to turn on an off to music, putting on a vibrant light show.

The lights dance to about 14 different songs. "Each and every strand of lights I can turn off within a 500th of a

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## Food bank program looks to alleviate student hunger

♦ By SEAN SAURO  
Staff Writer

Children of economically challenged families don't have to worry about being hungry during the weekend due to a food bank program that allows them to take food home from school.

Perry County Food Bank director John Kiner said he heard about the Backpack Program during a Central Pennsylvania Food Bank seminar and thought it'd be a good fit for this county.

"We explored it a little more, and we were really interested in getting it going. But we didn't have anyone to run it," Kiner said.

Enter Christina Voorhees, a West Perry mother who also took an interest. Kiner said Voorhees reached out to him, and he thought she'd make a good program coordinator.

"It was kind of like an an-

swer to our prayers," Kiner said.

A \$12,000 Pinnacle Health Foundation grant, coupled with matching funds from the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, allowed the program to be implemented at New Bloomfield Elementary School.

Voorhees said bags of food — containing breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as snacks for the weekend — are given to enrolled students from 3 to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays.

Bags are given to individual children, so if families have more than one child they will receive a bag for each.

"We have families that have three or four children, so they leave with three or four bags," Voorhees said.

The program began at the end of September. Currently, New Bloomfield Elementary is the only county school par-

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## Marysville ambulance service down due to few volunteers

♦ By SEAN SAURO  
Staff Writer

A lack of willing volunteers has led to a decision to discontinue Marysville Ambulance Association's service next spring after almost 30 years on the job.

Marysville Ambulance Association President Natasha Richards said the decision was the best option to ensure residents' safety.

"We are in trouble as far as

Richards said, adding that the association also covered areas outside the borough.

Perry County Emergency Management Coordinator Tom Bell said he associates the decrease in volunteers to an increase in regulations and required training programs.

"Some of them are up to 800 hours," Bell said, explaining areas with larger populations can pay emergency responders, but Perry County is not

employees tional cover

East Pen over as th provider M:

"It's just Richards s response ti ing to be th from what past year."

Marysvil er Scott W response t

## DRAWINGS REQUESTED

Hey kids, it's time to break out the crayons and Sharples

Bloomfield 17068. Parents, if you prefer, scan your child's

Santa from our young artists. Parents, if you'd like, you can

# Light

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 second of when I want to," Kolak said.

This year, the fourth annual light show opened to the public on Nov. 29 at 1976 Shermans Valley Road. Viewers can tune into 100.3 FM to listen while the lights dance to popular

Christmas tunes. "You watch the video from your car," he said. "Sometimes, we'll get some of the kids out there who have their car rocking. You can hear it vibrating in the house. We like it."

Seven songs play on a loop each night, and the tunes alter-

nate every other night. "Some favorites play both nights." Kolak estimates each night costs him about \$100 in electrical fees, but he doesn't charge spectators. In fact, he encourages them to donate to a worthy cause.

Last year the fund-raiser

aided a person who had cancer. Donations totaled about \$2,500.

"We got everything from handfuls of coins to bundles of \$20 bills," Kolak said.

This year, Kolak is encouraging spectators to donate money for Deven Jackson, a

10-year-old Shermans Dale boy who lost both legs due to meningitis.

Despite the loss, the boy was determined to continue playing football, and a pair of carbon fiber running blades allows him to do so, said Deven's mother, Michelle Jackson.

"He was very active before everything, and he was determined to stay active," she said, explaining that as Deven grows his running blades will need to be replaced.

"The blade itself is like \$9,000. That's just one," she said. "The problem is insurance doesn't cover them."

Michelle visited Kolak's display in past years but never knew about the donations. When he contacted her about helping Deven, she said she

was shocked. "I thought it was amazing. (Deven) loves Christmas decorations. My son is huge into Christmas lights."

Kolak is happy to help those in need. "We're just trying to keep Deven Jackson on the football field."

Kolak's shows begin at 5:30 most nights and end at 10 on weekdays and 11 on weekends. He extends the show when it gets closer to the holidays. "We'll keep it going till everybody's gone."

The last show will be held Jan. 3, and, in addition to donations, Kolak encourages those who enjoy the show to honk their horns when they leave.

"We have people who still honk their horns in the summer," he said.



**PACKING IT IN** — Carson Long Military Academy cadets packed food Nov. 5 for the new Backpack program at the Perry County Food Bank in New Bloomfield. Shown are Cadet Bugayev, Pinnacle Health

community relations director Barbara Terry, Backpack program coordinator Christina Voorhees, Cadet Jim, Cadet El-Sagheer, Lt. Carunchia and Cadet Rene.

# Food bank

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 ed in the program can contact the school or the food bank for more details.

"The program is out there for anyone in need to apply

for," Voorhees said, explaining there are no background checks and enrollment is open year-round.

Though grant funds got the program started, Voorhees is

looking for local businesses to join in to keep it moving.

"We will be looking for community sponsors and partners in the future. We'd like to keep the monetary do-

nations local."

Interested partners are encouraged to contact Voorhees by visiting the food bank or by e-mailing [pcbackpack@gmail.com](mailto:pcbackpack@gmail.com).

# Ambulance

*Continued from Page A1*

Marysville Borough Council is likely to approve the East Pennsboro takeover at its Dec. 8 meeting, Weaver said.

Richards said while Marysville Ambulance is relinquishing its responsibilities as primary responder, members will remain active in helping

roles. Holy Spirit EMS will continue to provide Advanced Life Support services.

Richards cautioned the Marysville Fire Company could suffer a similar fate.

"It's a volunteer issue, and we need volunteers," she said. "The fire company is going to be our next focus, but we rely on volunteers."

**582-4289**  
or **805-4274**

Nulton's  
Christmas