

Elliottsburg man crafts spectacular Christmas display

◆ By WADE FOWLER
Staff Writer

Kevin Kolak won't settle for second best.

Which explains his success as a competitive archer and as a purveyor of Christmas displays on a grand scale.

More than 100,000 lights dominate the landscape in the yard of his house along Route 274, Elliottsburg.

Not content with a static display, Kolak has trained the lights to dance to music in two separate multi-song shows that last about a half hour or so.

The lights and music synchronization consume about 200 hours of programming time per song, Kolak said.

Kolak always has been more than your average Christmas decorator, but inspired by a man in his home-

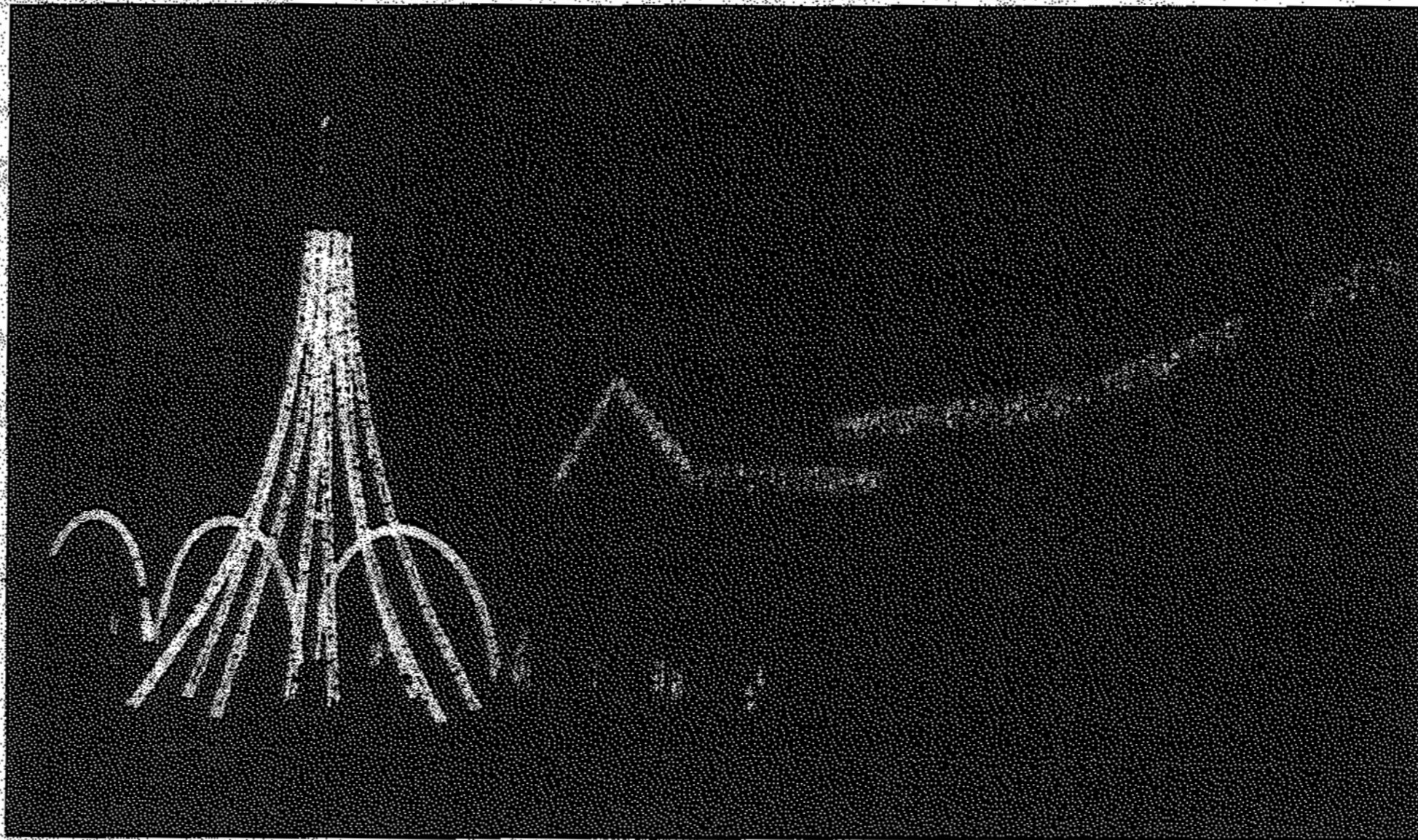
town of Tyrone, he made the commitment four years ago to transform an above-average display into something truly spectacular.

"When I was a kid someone in town near where I lived had a really nice display and I said to myself one day I'm going to be like that. I woke up one morning at age 58 and said it's got to be now because I'm running out of time."

The shows start at 6 p.m. and run until 9:30 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. The hours are 6 to 10:30 on Fridays and Saturdays.

The display takes about six weeks to set up and four days to tear down, Kolak said.

He usually disassembles the display the first full weekend in January, although sometimes he keeps it available for a while longer if the demand



LIGHTS UP — Kevin Kolak's Christmas lights and music extravaganza makes use of more than 100,000 lights, which are synchronized with Christmas music by 32 controllers which he constructed himself, all coordinated by a laptop computer.

is high.

Kolak has counted as many as 12 cars at one time along Shermans Valley as their occupants enjoy the show. To listen in, spectators need only to tune their car radios to FM 100.3.

It's a low power broadcast that doesn't interfere with radio reception in the area, Kolak said.

The new show for 2013 consists of a collection of Trans-Siberian Orchestra tunes, including "Mad Russian Christmas, Good King Joy, Wish Listz, and Wizards in the Winter, Hallelujah Chorus," recorded for Shadrack of Tennessee; and "Amazing Grace" by Yule.

That set is available on even days of the month.

On odd days, Kolak reprises
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LABOR INTENSIVE — It takes Kevin Kolak of Elliottsburg about six weeks to set up his Christmas lights display and four days to tear it down and store it in his garage.

Display

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some songs from last year's popular show, along with some new ones. The odd-day set includes the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's "Queen of Winter Night, Remember, Christmas Bells, Carousels and Times, Christmas Concerto, and Christmas Eve/Sarajevo 12/24," all by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Also included are "Amazing Grace" and "Hallelujah Chorus."

Kolak's shows have a pur-

pose beyond entertainment. Each year he collects donations for a worthy cause.

This year the show is dedicated to Vaughn Schlachter, who is being treated for leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant.

As of Dec. 18, \$360 had been left in the collection box at the end of the driveway.

For a more complete accounting of Kolak's display, readers may visit the website at kevinkolak.com.

Lights display brightens the future for family of man with leukemia

◆ By WADE FOWLER
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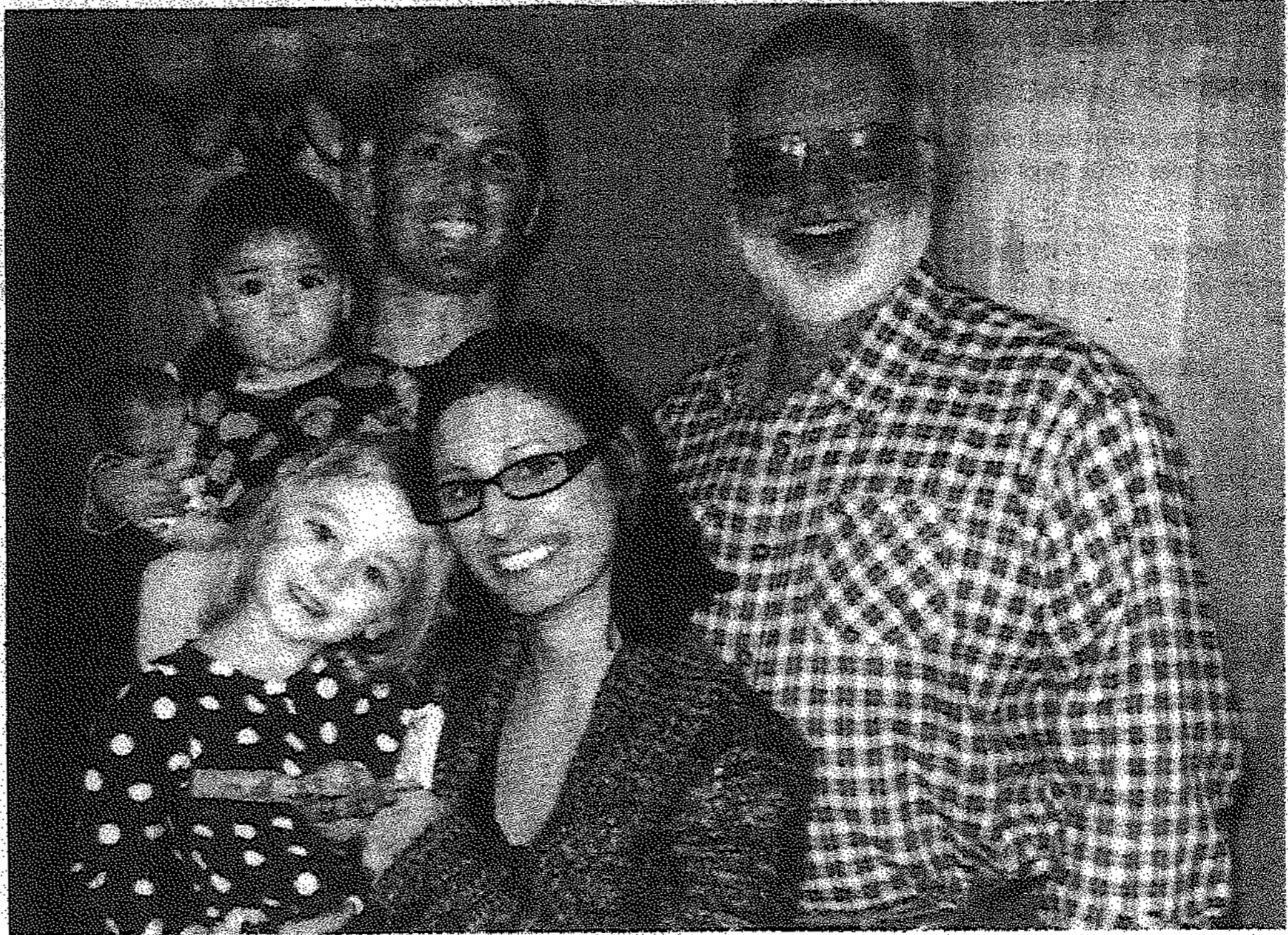
Kevin Kolak's Christmas light show extravaganza, set up at his home along Route 274, Elliottsburg, garnered donations totaling \$2,487 for Vaughn Schlachter and his family.

The display, featuring more than 100,000 lights, which were synchronized with music accessible via a low-frequency FM radio broadcast, was in operation for five weeks, although it was shut down several nights due to bad weather.

The money has been donated to Schlachter of Duncannon, who is being treated for leukemia and needs a bone marrow transplant.

A fund-raiser for Schlachter also is planned from 2 to 10 p.m. on Jan. 25 at the Duncannon EMS building. It will include a chili cook-off 2-4 p.m., raffles, and food and bake sales. Live music by Creekside Soul, Darkside on Tap and the Timeless Trio can be heard from 6 to 10 p.m.

Kolak's Christmas light show featured a donation box in his driveway in which people who had enjoyed the show could demonstrate their appreciation and their support



COMMUNITY SUPPORT — Kevin Kolak meets with Vaughn and Rachel Schlachter and their daughters Maeva and Zavella to turn over \$2,487, donated for the family's benefit by people who enjoyed a Christmas light show Kolak set up at his home along Route 274, Elliottsburg.

of the Schlachter family.

"There are lots of stories about the donations," Kolak wrote in an e-mail, "including one night when we had 16 \$20 bills and most if not all of them were from one donor or group

because of the way we found them folded in the box."

Each time a donation was made, a bell rang in Kolak's house. "Our bell was ringing one night so much that I had to look outside to see what

was going on ... only to see a couple young girls standing at the box. Later that evening when I retrieved the money it was full of change. Obviously that donation was just as important as the stack of \$20s."