

Saturday, Dec 20, 2003

Alameda County

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### **AROUND LIVERMORE: MARK TARTE**

Celebrate joy of the holidays with lights of the valley

ONCE AGAIN WE CLOSE IN on another Christmas season. Shoppers are out in force and the airwaves bombard our senses with the latest, newest gizmo to buy.

Sometimes we forget what this season is about. For Christians, it is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Right now, the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah is in full swing, celebrating the eight days of the burning of candles in a triumphant return to the temple.

We all need a break and of course, this time of year, driving around and looking at the decorative lights that are up around town is a perfect diversion. Of course, no trip to look at lights is complete without a stop at Deacon Dave Rezendes' house at 352 Hillcrest Ave. with more than 230,000 lights in a "North Pole Flight Training Center" theme. Visitors are welcomed until the New Year.

Other areas of town have wonderful and creative displays for people to enjoy. To find out more about the lights in town and around the valley, visit

<http://www.lightsofthevalley.com/>.

NEWCOTT/CALDEBERRY CONTEST -- While it is still the holiday season, you can start thinking about next year. Once again the Newcott/Caldeberry Contest (Not to be confused with the Newbery and Caldecott contests) that is sponsored by the Livermore Public Library is looking for submissions. Authors and illustrators can display their works and compete for prizes with others in town. The catch? You have to be a writer or artist in school and attending kindergarten to ninth grade.

The Newcott award is given for quality writing and the Caldeberry is awarded for quality illustrations. Each grade level is awarded, and students can enter a book or story jointly written and illustrated. There is time to start thinking about what to write or draw, as the deadline for entry is March 19.

We have many talented local artists and authors that call Livermore home and maybe out there among these students are their future counterparts. For more information about this contest or the Livermore Libraries in general, visit <http://www.livermore.lib.ca.us/>.

SEASON'S GREETINGS -- In less than two weeks, it will be a new year. I want to take this time before the last of the holiday rush and thank everyone who has helped to make this column, and me, better. Your e-mails, letters, notes and calls have all made this weekly feature a continuing source of fun and discovery for me, and I hope for you as well.

From the natural beauty that we can find just minutes outside of town, to the quaint homes and hidden treasures inside Livermore, we seem to have it all. Old-timers, who have watched our town grow from its farming past to a leading scientific research center in the 21st century, to the newcomers moving here with your own ideas, thoughts and dreams -- you are the ones that have made this column.

This past year we've witnessed the national tragedy of the space shuttle Columbia disaster and the expansion of the war on terror with the invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq. Locally, we have witnessed the tragic death of some too young to have really lived, honored

those that serve us in the military and in our communities, adopted units from different branches of the armed forces, celebrated, rejoiced, suffered, commiserated with life's tragedies and rewards, both great and small, and as a community, we have lived life the best way we know how.

So with this season's greetings, Terry, my wife, our children, Brian and Shannon, and I all want to wish you the merriest of Christmases and the happiest of holidays. We hope that this season finds you with the ones you love and hope that all your wishes come true. Until next week, be safe, be alert and God bless all of you and America.

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