

News

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Winter's dawn brings gifts for all

THE RAINS HAVE RETURNED after a long dry spell. After the first rainstorm of the season, the hills tried but failed to shed their summer coat of dried and withered grass. There was a hint of green under the old graying coat, but now, with the wet season here, our hills will once again wear their luxurious winter coat of emerald green.

As I write this, the sky is darkening and the wind picking up. Winter, for all intents and purposes, has finally returned. Around our neighborhoods, leaves pile up on lawns and sidewalks. Yellow, orange and red are the colors.

Many of our trees were transplanted from eastern environs long ago. Or they are planted in recent housing developments where the city dictated a type of tree for each subdivision and the houses in them. Whatever the reason, Livermore has more fall colors than ever before.

Now, coupled with the Christmas lights that are appearing on homes, the chill in the air and the returning rains, you know it is winter in the valley.

This time of year, when night falls, is the best time to drive around town. The Christmas lights that adorn most homes and the holiday decorations that grace the lawns, gardens and roofs are always a delight to behold.

You can drive to any point of the compass in town and find homes uniquely festooned with a variety of lights and symbols, or a whole neighborhood with each house distinctively lit but part of a greater neighborhood effort to celebrate the holidays.

CASA DEL POMBA: The old standby, Deacon Dave Rezendes' "Casa del Pomba" (House of the Dove), opened on Saturday with more than 200,000 lights in its display and a special theme to celebrate his 20th anniversary of his ordination as a Roman Catholic deacon.

Dave's home is located at 352 Hillcrest Ave. and is open to the public free of charge as his gift to the community.

If you do not like to drive around without a plan to view Christmas lights and decorations, visit <http://www.lightsofthevalley.com/>. This is a Web site created four years ago by Alex Dourov. It is all about homes around the valley, and beyond that people can see the wondrous displays their owners have created. Directions and photographs to each home are included on the site.

Everyone gives in his or her own way. Deacon Dave for 20 years has given back with his beautiful and whimsical light displays, and Alex Dourov makes it possible for all of us to see these wonderful celebrations, even if it is only on our computer.

A CALL FOR HELP: Another way people can help others during this season is through the Kiwanis Club of Livermore. The club is hosting parties for children at the Tri-Valley Haven for Women and the Sojourner House, a new home created by the Haven for homeless families with children and teens that opened in October. It is open to one- and two-parent families and provides shelter, life skills training and case management to families while they are sheltered there.

The parties include gifts, pizza and cookie decorating as well as a visit from Santa Claus. Besides the parties, the club also has adopted two families for Christmas through the Livermore Community Needs and Services Committee's "Adopt-A-Family Program."

If you would like to help the Kiwanis with their work for Haven and Sojourner House, as well as with their two adopted families, you can visit one of the following locations to pick up special angels that have a child's name, age and gift ideas for the child: Bank of the West, 2287 Second St.; Big O Tires, 4025 First St.; or Prudential Realty, 4465 First St.

If you cannot buy a gift, monetary donations to help the Kiwanis help these children and families will also be accepted. If you would like to talk to someone about making other donations or need more information, you can call Charles Crohare of the Bank of the West at 925-443-1218.

People helping people is part of this season. Livermore has always come through for those in need. I know that you will each make a difference in your own way this season for someone in need.

A beautiful valley graced with green hills and a town that is graced with wonderful people. It doesn't

get much better than that.
Until next week, be alert, be safe and God bless America.

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