

TOP: Jay Peterson and Citrus Tower co-owner Suzie Homan stand in front of a musically synchronized light show at the Citrus Tower on Tuesday in Clermont. ABOVE: Jay Peterson's home on Jayhill Drive in Minneola features a brilliantly lit Christmas display. BELOW: The Citrus Tower lights up the night above Clermont.

PHOTOS BY VICTORIA ALDRICH / DAILY COMMERCIAL



## *Lighting designer's handiwork transforms Clermont's Citrus Tower into a work of holiday art*

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Anyone driving by the historic Citrus Tower from 6 to 9 p.m. lately may have noticed something different — and much brighter — about it.

The tower has been adorned with more than 50,000 lights thanks to Jay Peterson, whose brightly decorated Minneola home is visited by thousands of people each holiday season.

"There's no one else around here who does what I do and I love the smiles on people's faces when they visit my house," Peterson said. "The kids especially are in awe because there's so much to see, but the adults get very into it, too."

"And the tower ... that's my trophy now."

Greg and Suzie Homan, the Citrus Tower's owners, say people love the light show, adding that every night since Dec. 3, families have gathered in the parking lot to take in the display.

"We just wanted to give something back to the community and remind people that the tower is still here. It's a neat time of year to do something

# LIGHTS

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ifferent," Suzie Homan said. As for Peterson, the idea for his intricate light displays started while surfing the Internet one day and coming across a video of a house lit up with Christmas lights synchronized to music.

Peterson liked the idea so much that he started searching for more houses like that and began researching how the lights were programmed.

In his quest, Peterson found that it took custom-designed equipment and programs, including "Light-O-Rama" controllers to syn-

chronize the shows. He decided to go on a shopping spree.

In 2007, the equipment transformed his lawn into a Christmas light extravaganza. Immediately, people began to take notice.

"I was hooked and I soon learned that I could make the lights do just about anything. I was only limited by my imagination," Peterson said. "I really didn't realize I'd been always interested in this, though. I guess it was a hidden passion that's kind of been following me around."

When Peterson purchased his first house, he couldn't wait until the beginning of the Christmas decorating

season.

"I started off with some basic icicle lights and some lighted figures. Each year, I added something like a couple of deer in my yard and a few more strands of lights on the house."

Peterson said he is amazed at how many people visit his house to see the lights and has always had people comment that he should go into the lighting business.

In 2010, Greg and Suzie Homan visited Peterson's house and thought the 55-year old tower might look even better if it sported some of Peterson's "glitz."

"We saw what Jay did at his house and how cool it was

and immediately, I told my husband, "Hey, we should do that to the Tower," Suzie Homan said. "We're so excited."

In June, the Homans contracted for five years with Peterson and Jay's Lights was born, a company that specializes in year-round lighting, including landscape and holiday lighting.

It took Peterson five months to prepare the Citrus Tower show and one month to connect all the lights, including the 135-foot long strands reaching from top to bottom of the tower.

The Citrus Tower light show will run through Dec. 23.

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE

# Christmas



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