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Boro set for annual Christmas light tour

BY KATHY MELLOTT

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PORTAGE— The homes in the Portage area are being decked out in lights and holiday decorations as residents gear up for the annual Christmas Light Tour.

Sponsored by the Portage Area Historical Society, the tour is in its 14th year and has become so popular organizers are now taking reservations, longtime society member Ruth Richardson said Thursday.

"Last year they were lined up a block long. So this year, we're asking for reservations so they don't have to stand in line," she said from her Farren Street home.

This year's tour is set for 6 to 9 p.m. Dec. 15.

It is being held in conjunction with the Portage community's newly inaugurated Winterfest celebration Dec. 14-16.

The public is taken by bus, paid for by a local businessman, on a half-hour tour of homes in the borough and Portage Township.

The bus will leave the Portage Station Museum on Lee Street every 45 minutes.

A route is developed prior to the tour and – while the goal is to showcase those homes and businesses with the largest displays – homes with smaller offerings also are included.

Past historical society president and current member Tom Gaudlip organized the lights tour in 1993 to get more people to come to the museum, which had opened a few years earlier.

Last year, tour numbers topped out at 460 people and even more are expected this year with the three-day Winterfest celebration.

"It's really caught on. Sometimes we sing on the bus. We have music playing on the bus," Gaudlip said.

Along with the tour, the Portage Area High School brass choir will be performing Christmas music at the museum and the Portage Area Community Band will be playing holiday favorites.

Free hot chocolate, cookies and pizza will be served at the museum and the public will be invited to view the model train display on the second floor.

Santa Claus will be on hand to greet the children and will give each a stocking filled with treats.

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