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Tree of Light fundraiser raises over $4K

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For the past four years, the Dakota Hospital Foundation has hosted the Tree of Lights fundraiser.

The event allows community members to purchase a light on a public Christmas tree – located at the intersection of Main and Plum – in honor of someone dear to them.

This year, the event was expanded to include a wreath-decorating contest that drew 24 entries from area businesses, organizations and individuals – and raised approximately $4,675 at auction Thursday, Dec. 1.

The money raised will go toward funding diagnostic equipment for the radiology department at Sanford Medical Center in Vermillion.

"We were very excited … that the business community really stepped up and did a great job, and the individuals did, too," said Mary Merrigan, director of public relations at Sanford Vermillion. "There's so much talent. The wreaths are really phenomenal."

The wreaths were on display at the Al Neuharth Center the night of the auction, drawing many interested on-lookers.

Onlookers inspect the wreaths that were decorated as part of the Dakota Hospital Foundation's annual Tree of Lights fundraiser. This was the first year wreaths were decorated and auctioned as part of the event.
(Photo by Travis Gulbrandson)

Joanne Ustad, Dakota Hospital Foundation board member, said she hoped Thursday's viewers would be inspired to participate in the event next year.

"If they see what's here this year, we certainly hope that it'll grow next year as people get ideas of what it is, and just kind of spark their interest in it," Ustad said.

Merrigan agreed, adding, "It's a really nice crowd, and considering this is the first real cold day that we've had I was a little nervous about that. But it's not bad at all, and I'm sure the bodies will keep coming in."

Sixteen of the entries were designed by businesses or organizations, with the remaining eight decorated by individuals.

The wreaths were judged by a committee consisting of a Dakota Hospital Foundation member, a member of the Sanford medical staff and a Vermillion citizen.

Merrigan said entries were judged based on four criteria: Appearance, creativity, balance and "wow" factor.

"They all scored on those categories and came together and deliberated, and I tell you what, they had a tough job," she said. "It was really hard. They were there for almost over two hours coming down to the final decisions."

The judges' results were:

- Best of Show: Dakota Realty/Nadeen Peterson
- Individual: Gayle Bliss
- Business/Organization: Sanford Clinic Vermillion

suldoku

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