

Tangerine lights illuminate night

By **Monica Chen**
Reporter

Lights dance on the lawn, the roof and even from lamp poles to the beat of music from two neighboring houses, 1164 and 1168 Tangerine Way, in Sunnyvale. The music is broadcast from radio station 104.1 FM, which is audible approximately ¼ mile from the houses from 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m., said resident of 1168 Tangerine Way Dave Severns.

Using software called Light-O-Rama, Severns uses his engineering expertise to program certain lights to turn on to match the beat of music playing. Some songs have animated light shows while others are static, which is when all the lights are on. "I've been taking my kids and their friends for the past four to five years," said Homestead parent Joan Utley. "It's a really worthwhile experience and so unique since they have their own radio station."

"It's pretty cool the way the lights dance to music," agreed her daughter, freshman Kelly Utley.

A non-Christmas playlist broadcasts from 8 to 8:30 p.m. during which the lights dance continuously. Chosen primarily for their beats, Severns handpicks songs like "We Will Rock You," "Boom, Boom, Out Go The Lights" and "Hey Mickey." Severns can even program the lights to make it look like they're "battling it out between houses," meaning that

the houses take turns flashing lights to simulate dueling.

All the tunes are chosen by Severns, although recently neighbors Andy and Diana Pease, residents of 1164 Tangerine Way, have started suggesting songs. This is the first year that Andy has programmed a song. The song was "Remember" by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. It took him 20 hours to match the lights to each beat, he said.

New features this year include a snow machine, a new "Megatree," a tree made entirely out of lights, additions to the magnolia trees including large twinkling lights and strobe lights and an updated Rudolph. In addition to moving and talking, Rudolph now has sunglasses and a collar, said Severns.

So why put on this show year after year? "We like to do it for the community and because it's an activity that my daughter and I have been working together on for a long time," said Severns. "Planning begins in March, with building and organizing playlists continuing throughout the year. The lights are actually installed beginning on Nov. 1."

They've even risked their lives setting it up, said Andy Pease. "Those streetlamps may be made of concrete, but once you're up there, they start waving around," said Pease. They now use a hydraulic lift to put up the lights. Opening night was Nov. 25 at 8 p.m. Severns guessed that 300 people attended on the first night. The street was blocked off,

hot apple cider and cookies were handed out and the show began. Viewers did not have to pay for anything, although they were encouraged to give cans and monetary donations to the Second Harvest Food Bank. Last year, Severns collected \$22,466 and 7.5 barrels of food, which qualified him to reach the Blue Diamond category, the highest rank, in donations to the charity along with big corporations such as Cisco and Applied Materials. Monetary donations in particular are encouraged because the Family Foundation matches donations up to \$500. For food donations, the Second Harvest Food Bank prefers nutritional non-perishable foods that aren't packaged in glass, said Severns.

For more information about the light display, the food drive, and a description of opening night, visit <http://severex.com/xmas>.

The Christmas display continues through Jan. 1. It's recommended to go sometime around 8 p.m. so that you can catch some of the animated non-Christmas songs. Severns requests that cars park on the far side of the street and not between the driveways of the two houses so that everybody can see. Then either tune into 104.1 FM or walk outside and listen to the music from the speakers hanging on the magnolia trees.