

Teen's Light Show Raises Nearly \$14,000

Local Foundation Makes Big Contribution

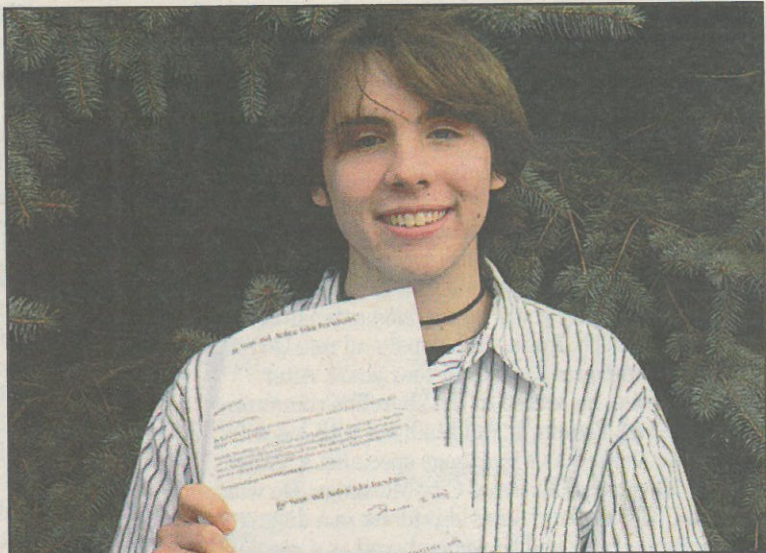
By Pam Johnson
Courier Senior Staff Writer

From the number of cars stopping by his outdoor Christmas light show, Joe Petrowski knew his computer-driven, light-and-music masterpiece was drawing a good response. But, as he handed out candy canes and accepted donations for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, he couldn't have predicted one very amazing response—a \$10,000 donation, made in his honor, to the hospital.

"I found out when I got a letter in the mail. I told my dad and then I called [St. Jude of Connecticut Network President] Tony Raucci. I said, 'I know I just talked to you the other day, but I think you'll want to hear this,'" said Petrowski, a GHS senior.

What Petrowski had to share with Raucci was that The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation of Guilford was making a \$10,000 contribution, in Petrowski's honor, to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

"When he told me, I said, 'This is our Christmas miracle,'" said



GHS Senior Joe Petrowski's light show to benefit St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital brought in more than \$3,000 from viewers; and a letter notifying that \$10,000 would be donated in his honor by The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation.

Photo by Pam Johnson

Raucci, who had earlier introduced himself to Petrowski after learning St. Jude's was Petrowski's charity of choice for this year's display.

Petrowski told Raucci that he'd received a handwritten note from Jill Eder, president of The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation. She wrote, "the lighting display was awesome, with perfectly accompanied music. You should be very proud...your commitment to give back is to be applauded. The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation is proud to make a \$10,000 contribution in your honor to St. Jude."

Speaking to the *Courier*, Eder said she learned of the lighting display from a news story. Petrowski noted he made an extra effort this year to publicize his holiday lighting show by sending press releases to as many news agencies as he could. His story was picked up by local newspapers, local television news, and also carried on national cable news affiliates, including Fox.

"I just kept emailing to get the word out and to bring in more donations," he said, adding, "a lot of it was also just word of mouth."

Over the past few years, Petrowski has built a reputation locally for his seasonal light shows

on the front lawn of his family's Valley Shore Drive home.

A 2007 *Guilford Courier* Person of the Week, Petrowski has created several different lighting displays to benefit charities of his choice. He raised money for the Guilford Food Bank with a 2007 Fourth of July display and, this past Halloween, collected funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Prior to this year, his 2006 Christmas light show had raised the most money, \$800; which he donated in equal parts to the American Cancer Society and the Guilford Animal Shelter.

Petrowski said he could see public response to this year's holiday light show shaping up to be the best ever, even before the remarkable contribution came in from The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation.

"It was pretty steady, between \$50 and \$100 a night and more on weekends. We got donations from 50 cents to \$50," he said.

Together with the \$10,000 donation from The Yvette and Arthur Eder Foundation, collections from the display totaled \$13,613.04, said Petrowski.

"I just want to thank the Foundation and thank everybody for coming to see it."

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