

# ChristmasExpo

## Dealing with Media & Charities

**Mark 'Zman' Zembruski**  
*WoodinvilleWonderland.com*



**ChristmasExpo**

# Who is Mark Zembruski?

- “Zman” on every forum
- Creator of Woodinville Wonderland, Seattle WA
- Electronic Design Automation Industry
- Started decorating inside 1979, outside 1989
- Started to grow 2003, 2004 - 48 channels, one looped sequence, 2005 one song on demand
- Today 600+ channels-125K lights-7100 E1.31
- Originated the term “I have the C.L.A.P., do you?”
- One of the principles of the Pacific Northwest C.L.A.P. annual Christmas Light gathering



# Woodinville Wonderland

- 2006 - Christmas Lights to Woodinville Wonderland
- 2007 - Started collecting for Special Olympics of Washington, 2009 added focus to Northshore Wranglers
- 2007 - Got to know Bob Rivers KZOK FM (Yellow Snow Twisted Christmas Carol)
- 2010 & 2012 hosted Judy Pancoast charity concert added 1 'Santa Can'
- Crazy enough to TURN DOWN, in 2009 - TLC's Invasion of the Christmas Lights, 8x and The Great Christmas Light Fight (Currently) 11x



# Woodinville Wonderland

## Media Affiliation

- Seattle Times
- Woodinville Weekly
- Woodinville Patch
- Seattle Puget Sound Business Journal
- Seattle NW Source
- KOMO (ABC affiliate)
- KIRO (CBS affiliate – KIRO 1000 AM)
- Bob Rivers (KZOK & KJR FM)



# What Makes Woodinville Wonderland Christmas Lights Show Different?

- ✓ **Community** – We focus on community, work with local Jr. High and High School for community service. Girl Scout, Brownies, host baked goods, hot drinks, collect for out charity, associated with multiple retirement homes, accommodate buses
- ✓ **Choreographed Show** – 52 minute show(s), Hosted with a MC, jokes, announcements, Kodak Moments. 1 acre with multiple vignettes, blend of all features. Primarily a walking display so we do not rush our visitors off.
- ✓ **Special night each Season for our Charities** – Special Olympics of Washington & Northshore Wranglers are invited for a special night with snacks and appetizers
- ✓ **Fundraising** – Since 2007 we have collected over \$40K in cash donations to our charities



# Relationship with Local Santa & Mrs Clause





# How Many Porta Potties Do You Have?

- In the past, such calculations have included number of lights, channels, elements (inflatables, wireframes, blow molds), controllers, power draw, etc.
- But now the “Porta Potty” has become the new standard for determining Christmas Light Display size!
- Woodinville Wonderland calls this the “Santa Can”



# 8 Steps for a Successful Christmas Lights Display

1. Find a niche & differentiate yourself.
2. Start small, yet think big.
3. First impression counts.
4. Good reputation.
5. Constant improvement & innovation – don't be afraid to “think outside the box.”
6. Listen to the community & neighbors.
7. Plan for success.
8. Work smarter... not harder!





# Be Careful What You Wish For!

- You need to plan ahead & be able to handle the excessive traffic to your display. Planning includes traffic control, shorter playlists, & possibly even early shut off.
- Some over the top & very popular displays require traffic management company or local law enforcement assistance... which costs \$\$\$!
- Be aware of local ordinances & HOA rules.
- Communicate with your neighbors & city hall.



# Consider Playing “Rules” Voice Overs During the Show



Don't be Afraid to Reemphasis the  
“Rules” During the Show



*Voice Overs by The Demented Elf*



# Top 6 Media Relations Tips

1. Be available... **ALWAYS!**
2. Make your story newsworthy – Novelty, current event, accomplishment, new element, etc.  
**MAKE IT VISUAL**
3. Think about your story in relation to the media outlet you are pitching. **TV IS BEST**
4. Know who you want to target & customize your press release accordingly. **RESEARCH**
5. Write & submit a **GOOD** press release w/ picture at least 7-10 days before the event.
6. In preparatory discussions, **SEED** questions that are relevant and important to your display



# What is a Press Release?

- A press release or news release is a **written or recorded communication** directed at members of the **news media** for the **purpose of announcing** something ostensibly **newsworthy**.
- **MUST** include **Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How**.
- Elements include **Headline, Dateline, Intro, Body, Boilerplate, Close, and Media Contact**.



Contact:

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Media Contact ->

Headline -> **Magical Dancing Christmas Lights Show  
Goes "Green" This Holiday Season**

Dateline ->

CATHEDRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA (November 20, 2009) – The Coachella Valley's largest, state-of-the-art computer controlled and animated holiday lights show is going "green" this year at the Simmons Home located at 68000 Estio Road, between Avenida Maravilla and Vista Chino in Cathedral City, just blocks away from Minerva Road's infamous "Candy Cane Lane."

<- Intro

HiTech Light Shows, a company which specializes in computer controlled animation and lighting shows, created the design, replacing traditional incandescent lights with energy-efficient LED lights (light emitting diode). LED lights are brighter, more durable, longer lasting and also use up to 95% less energy, which dramatically reduces the show's overall carbon footprint.

"Switching to LED lights will help us cut carbon dioxide emissions by more than 2,300 pounds a year," explains Luis Lua, co-founder of HiTech Light Shows. "That's equivalent to planting about 80 trees every year. We are also researching the use of other alternative energies, such as solar power, and obtaining carbon offset credits for future lighting shows," he adds.

The show includes approximately 50,000 LED lights, a 24-foot tall Mega Christmas Tree, and close to three miles of cabling. The lights are connected to more than 100 computer controlled channels, using specialized lighting control hardware and software powered by an Intel-based ViVa Systems computer running Microsoft Windows 7 operating system. Users can view and interact with the show in real-time at [www.MyDesertLights.com](http://www.MyDesertLights.com).

<- Body

Short-range radio broadcast from the Simmons Home on 107.5 FM ("The Icicle"), the show is set to popular holiday music hits from such artists as Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Mannheim Steamroller, Bing Crosby, Gene Autry, and others. Rich Fields, a television and radio personality and announcer for the CBS game show "The Price Is Right," provides the narration.

"As a kid I was in awe of large Christmas displays and loved the lights so much," says Michael A. Simmons, co-founder of HiTech Light Shows. "Now, it is magical for me to see the faces of the children and adults who view the show. Christmas was always the most anxiously awaited holiday, and as I got older, I realized that the true reason for this joyous season is to celebrate the birth of Jesus," he says.

The show runs daily from November 27, 2009 through January 1, 2010 and is free to the public. Donations will be distributed to Martha's Village & Kitchen, a non-profit organization that is celebrating its 20 years of service in the Coachella Valley helping neighbors in need become self-sufficient.

Show times are Sunday through Thursday, from 5-10 PM and Friday and Saturday, from 5-11 PM. On December 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> from 6-9 PM, Santa Claus will make an appearance, and free hot chocolate and snacks will be served. On New Year's Eve, a special lights animation will be shown to help ring in the New Year.

Boilerplate ->

For more information, please contact Michael A. Simmons of HiTech Light Shows at 1-888-988-8045 or at [info@hitechlightshows.com](mailto:info@hitechlightshows.com).

### <- Close



# Headline & Lead Paragraph is Everything in a Press Release

- 12/05/07 – “A New Way to Experience the Sights & Sounds of the Holiday Season Makes its Way to the Coachella Valley”
- 11/20/09 – “Magical Dancing Christmas Lights Show Goes GREEN This Holiday Season”
- 12/24/10 – “Cathedral City Home Named Best Christmas Lights Display in America by The Early Show on CBS”
- 11/13/12 – “2012 Simmons Christmas Lights Show to Debut on November 23<sup>rd</sup>”
- 11/25/13 – “Southern California Family Featured On New ABC Reality TV Show-The Great Christmas Light Fight”





# Headline & Lead Paragraph is Everything in a Press Release, Cont.

- **CATHEDRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA (November 20, 2009)** – The Coachella Valley's largest, state-of-the-art computer controlled and animated holiday lights show is going “green” this year at the Simmons Home located at 68000 Estio Road, between Avenida Maravilla and Vista Chino in Cathedral City, just blocks away from Minerva Road’s infamous “Candy Cane Lane.”
- **CATHEDRAL CITY, CA (November 21, 2013)** – The Simmons Family’s Dancing Christmas Lights Show will debut on Friday, November 22nd at 5 pm at the Simmons home, located at 68000 Estio Road, between Avenida Maravilla and Vista Chino in Cathedral City – just blocks away from Minerva Road’s infamous “Candy Cane Lane.”



# Charities & Your Display

- Many ***different types of charities*** to choose from... church, ministry, cancer, medical, special needs, homeless, hungry / food bank, military, education, animals, etc.
- ***Partner*** with your charity, it's a ***relationship*** – it takes ***both*** parties; it's **not** just 1-way.
- Can be a year-long or December-only.
- Partnering with a charity is the ***best public relations*** move you can make!



# Charities & Your Display, Cont.

- Make the charity ***work for you***... remember work ***smarter***, not ***harder***!
- Charitable ***donations*** don't just have to be ***money*** - they can be ***food, clothing, toys, supplies, gift certificates***, etc.
- Charity can assist in ***procuring free or low-cost*** candy canes, snacks, drinks, etc. for your visitors.
- It's okay to ask your charity to ***share expenses***.
- Make sure you have a ***donation box*** which is ***secure***, clearly ***lit & marked*** accordingly.



# Donation Box



# It's Your Show... Feel Free to "Plug" Your Charity During the Show



## Inform Your Visitors About Your Charity During the Show



*Voice Overs by The Demented Elf*



# Suggestions for Choosing a Charity

- Select a charity based on your interests, life experiences, or causes important to you.
- Make sure the charity's mission & purpose aligns with your vision.
- Review the charity's finances & track record. Fund Raising & Administrative Costs ***less than 30%*** of budget. Examine charity's Leadership.
- Volunteer first & get to know the charity.
- Trust your instincts!





# Charity Recommendations

- **Military/Veterans** – Homes For Our Troops, Semper Fi Fund, Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America, Wounded Warrior Project
- **Youth** – Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Toys For Tots, Scholarship America
- **Humanity** – American Red Cross, Salvation Army, American Cancer Society
- **Hunger** – Feeding America, Action Against Hunger USA

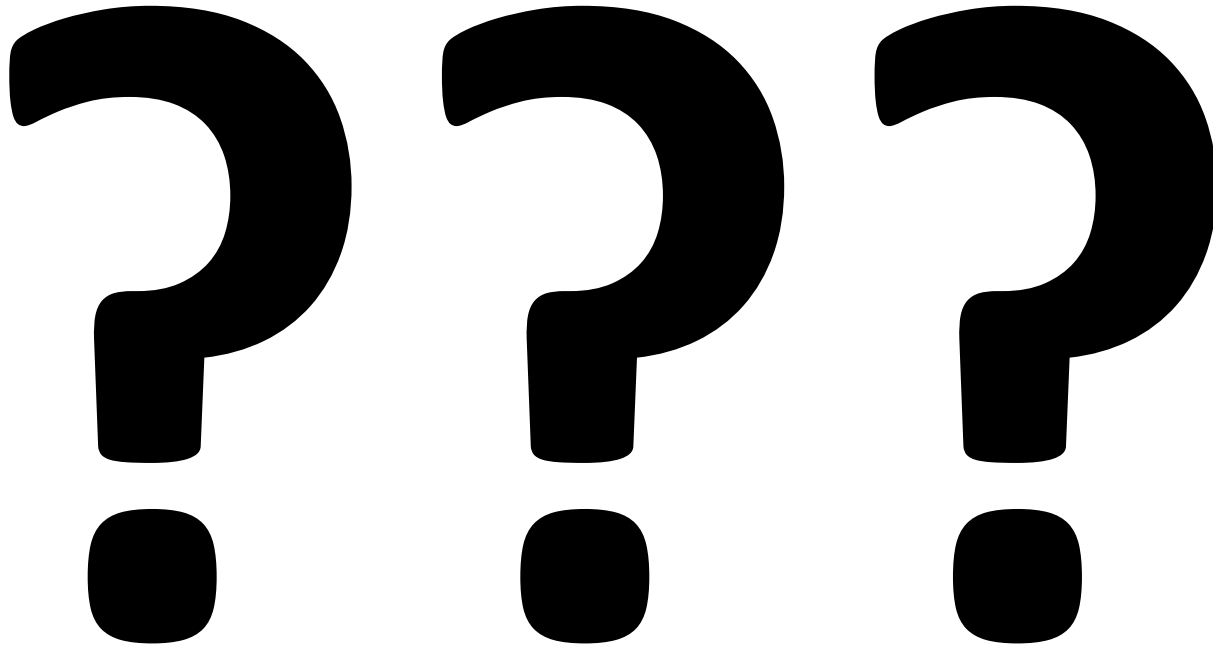


# Charity Logistics

- Meet and inform your charity your intent
- Charities want to ensure they are properly represented
  - Specific font and type sets for logos etc... for all outward facing information, posts, advertising etc...
- Does your company offer fund matching? One way to augment your proceeds
- **Non-Profit Info Sites:**
  - [GuideStar.org](http://GuideStar.org)
  - [MyPhilanthropedia.org](http://MyPhilanthropedia.org)
  - [GreatNonProfits.org](http://GreatNonProfits.org)
  - [TheNonProfitTimes.com](http://TheNonProfitTimes.com)



# Questions



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**Special Thank You to  
Michael Simmons**



**ChristmasExpo**