

A New Year brings about new resolutions (or familiar resolutions that we forget by the end of each January but swear we'll follow through on next year). I think my biggest resolution will be that I will take some time for myself. I started the New Year with sinusitis. Not a great way to start 2020, let alone each and every day. About this time of year I've run out of steam and my body and illnesses catch up to me. However, I have so many people I need to thank for making this Gettysburg holiday season one of the most beautiful we've had.

GARMA starts the holiday season with the annual tree lighting festival the day after Thanksgiving. In chronological order, this is what happens to make it all a success. The first thank you goes to Leonard Loski (The Gettysburg Experience magazine) for bringing his team of wonderful volunteers to the GARMA shed to check/replace each and every lightbulb on every wreath and tree panel before they are hung for the holidays. This crew is truly a family of friends who have made my light bulb checking day easier for the past 2 years. I can't thank them enough. By the time we leave the shed our hands are filthy and we've inhaled a lot of generator gas fumes. I look forward to working with this team again this coming October, but please, let me be the ones to buy the chocolate milk and donuts!!

Ross Brownley (Brownley & Sons) and his team are up bright and early the Monday of Thanksgiving week hanging the beautiful wreaths throughout the downtown and Steinwehr Ave. This year Ross and his team took on a new challenge - draping the lights in the trees in the planters of each corner of the square. I think he and I scratched our heads a bit as to how it would work, but he figured out a way to hang the lights so that they can stay up year round without worry of them growing into, or harming, the trees. Thank you Ross for the wreaths and tackling the new challenge I gave you this year.

It's not Christmas without a tree! I can't thank Rob Harbaugh enough when it comes to the task of assembling the tree. He and his crew have been doing this for years for GARMA and they have it down to a science. Once the tree is up it's only a matter of days until it is lit to kick off the Christmas season. The first two years that I was in charge of Christmas for GARMA we kept the tree lights on a timer. The new, existing, tree was purchased with LED lights. The decision was made by the GARMA board members to leave the tree lit 24 hours a day. Since LED lights are very economical and we didn't see a huge rise in the electric bill (GARMA pays the electric for the tree/wreaths) after the first year, the tree stayed lit. I thank Rob for putting up with my text messages and phone calls asking if the tree timer was off so the lights would stay on. The Public Works crew also hangs the holiday banners you see on poles that don't have a wreath.

Gettysburg Rental Center takes care of bringing Santa's Shanty to town. It's about a four person effort to make sure that the shanty safely rolls off its trailer. Gary DeCroes, owner of the Rental Center, makes sure the fireplace in the Shanty is cleaned and ready for use (sorry mice, you have to go!). The Rental Center donates the propane to keep the fireplace roaring and the Shanty nice and cozy. Gary also is tasked with flipping the switch the night of the tree lighting when Santa says "light that tree".

I am also tasked with hiring Santa (or Santa's as was the case this year). Our Santa's this year were Ben Oelker (second year), Cary Shirley and Jason Officer. These three balanced out the schedule and made sure that Santa was on hand to greet all with a hearty 'ho, ho, ho' and listen to their requests. Don't worry Mom and Dad - Santa always tells the kids 'I'll do my best',

that way they're not expecting that pony in the yard that they asked for. Thank you Santa's, you were great!

Thank you to the board members of GARMA for their support during all of this craziness, MY craziness, of pulling this all together. Thank you to Gettysburg Hotel (John Berendt and Andrea Proulx) for supplying the free hot chocolate that was served the night of the tree lighting. Thank you Steve Smith (Dual FX/Ultimix DJs) for providing the inviting holiday music as people gathered to the square (and personally, thank you for working in some Barry Manilow holiday songs for me).

Many thanks to all that I didn't name but thank you's can be found on our website, www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com. Thank you to the town of Gettysburg for making this such a great occasion.

Jennie Dillon is the Vice President of GARMA, owner of Artworks and Office and Events Manager at Gettysburg Rental Center.