

?Creating Charlestown's Christmas city tree

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 05 November 2008 00:00 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 November 2008 16:15

? During the recent months, when most of Charlestown was enjoying a relatively mild summer, Mayor Bob Hall was dreaming up ideas for expanding the annual Light-up Charlestown into a greater event. He would like Charlestown to be known as "Christmas City" and to become a holiday destination for families throughout the region.

Mayor Hall told Charlestown's assistant to the Parks Advisory Board and Beautification Committee member, Rhonda Davidson, "To begin with, I want a 40-foot Christmas tree in Greenway Park, for Christmas City."

Davidson went home and told her husband, Eddie, who took her outside, and said, "Do you see that flagpole? That's 20-feet. That would be a really big tree. Go make sure 20 feet isn't tall enough."

When questioned, Mayor Hall said, "No, 20 feet is not big enough. We need a 40-foot tree." So, Davidson told her husband, and he decided he would figure out a way to do it.

Now, if you know Eddie, you know his brain is wired a little differently from many of us. He has an active imagination than helps him make treasures out of junk. While at work at Jeffboat he started poking around; looking at stuff that is discarded. This includes lots and lots of metal spools that are left after welding wire has been used from them. His brain-gears began turning and in his mind he started seeing these spools stacked in an orderly fashion, in the form of an evergreen tree.

He began measuring spools, calculating how many spools it would take, and determining the necessary circumference of the lower circles to have a stable base to support 40-feet of stacked spools. He took a pile of the spools to Charlestown to show Mayor Hall and explained his plan. There was a definite look of skepticism in the Mayor's expression, but he gave Eddie the go-ahead since he seemed so certain of the intended outcome.

Now Eddie spends every free moment in the evenings and during the weekends stacking, positioning and spot-welding the tiers of the tree. Each spool receives at least 10 welds, multiplied by approximately 3,600 spools, and that's just to prepare the eight tiers, which are each five-feet tall. Each spool weighs 1.2 pounds. The internal frame and supports will require additional welding and make it even heavier. Eddie estimates the final weight of the tree will be 5,800 pounds.

Boy Scout Troop 188 is also actively working on the tree by providing after-weld cleaning, removing burrs. Troop Leader Mike Whisman was sufficiently impressed by his initial introduction to Eddie in the workshop.

Whisman said, "That is a much bigger project than I had imagined. That took quite an ingenious mind to think that up. The cooperation and teamwork to get it all done is wonderful. The tree will be a great asset to the city."

Eddie and Rhonda Davidson have asked for the assistance of any experienced welders who would like to contribute to this incredible effort. Eddie's cousin and a friend help when possible, but more welders are needed. Rhonda's "Call for All Welders" has become urgent as Light-up Charlestown, on November 29, is in just over three weeks.

Call Rhonda at 256-3422 if you are available to help weld the Christmas City tree.