



KEIZERTIMES file/Craig Murphy
The First Slavic Baptist Church truck (top) and May Trucking entry (above) have long been well lit for the Festival of Lights Holiday Parade and have been crowd favorites. After 25 years, the parade's run has ended.

PARADE,
continued from Page A1

said. "This event has been made possible year after year because of the awesome teams and their passion, our dedicated entries, sponsors and community supporters. We feel very blessed and honored that we have been able to produce this wonderful event and create wonderful holiday memories for our local and regional communities."

Mitchell told the *Keizertimes* on Tuesday the hope had been someone else would take over the event.

"We looked for someone and no one took it," she said. "We met with big and small companies. We tried to get people locally to take it and run with it. It's just time for us to retire. We want to enjoy our retirement while we are healthy. It takes a lot of time and volunteer hours to do an event, 3,500 hours a year minimum. That's a lot of giving back to the community."

Last year's parade came in the midst of several days of rain. The rain stopped shortly before the parade began down River Road, but the weather forecast appeared to keep some people from both participating and viewing.

Weather issues were always an issue to contend with, not surprising since the parade took place the second Saturday of December.

"We had no control over Mother Nature," Mitchell said with a laugh. "Contrary to popular belief, I don't have a direct contact with Mother Nature. We've been very blessed with the weather. Every time the parade started, the rain stopped."

Mitchell said not finding someone to take over the event was a sign of the times.

"We really wanted to have a great event and to have someone take it over," she said. "A lot of people don't realize how much money and time it takes. There's a new generation that doesn't do a lot of volunteering. The other thing that needs to be addressed is volunteerism. That's such a huge part of our community."

Mayor Cathy Clark met with Mitchell last Saturday and got the news before it went public.

"I'm very thankful for volunteers like the Mitchells who have given so many years of their lives for an event so wonderful for our community," Clark said on Tuesday. "They have raised so much for non-profits that help the community. They have created so many special memories. I wish them well in their retirement."

Mitchell isn't sure yet what her December will look like this year.

"I haven't had a Christmas for 23 years," she said. "I'm lucky to get a tree up and lights on each year. It's going to be real hard. I don't think we'll be around for Christmas. It'll be very hard for Bob and I. We really want to enjoy our retirement. We gave our 23 years to the community. It's a bittersweet thing for us, it really is."

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