

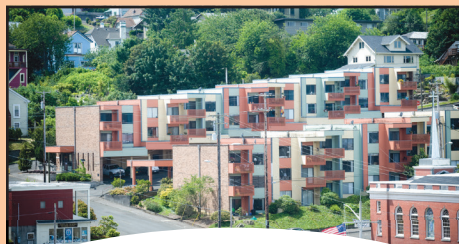


ABOVE: New this year, Matt the DJ elf will spin holiday tunes starting at 4 p.m. Saturday. **RIGHT:** Spectators watch fireworks at the lighting of the Crab Pot Christmas Tree in 2020.



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

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A uniquely Ilwaco Christmas

Crab Pot Christmas Tree will be lit Saturday

By **NIKKI DAVIDSON**
COAST WEEKEND

Surrounded by a maze of commercial fishing gear and boats at the Port of Ilwaco, a group of volunteer elves strategized their next move.

“It’s kind of like a big version of Jenga,” said Jenna Austin as she sized up the towering pile in front of her.

Austin, the Ilwaco Merchants Association president, was focused on the mountain of approximately 170 retired crab pots in front of her. They were carefully positioned into a pyramid to create the unmistakable figure of a Christmas tree.

A pair of volunteers had already climbed the structure as

if it was an adult-sized jungle gym, balancing near the top to string lights throughout the wire netting.

The quirky holiday tradition started in Ilwaco 15 years ago, created by a grassroots community group. Inspired by lobster-pot trees on the East Coast, they wanted to create something similar in Ilwaco to connect the city’s fishing industry with a growing community of artists.

Building the crab pot tree has become more complicated over the years, as the number of pots used to create the tree have now quadrupled.

There’s even an employee with the Port of Ilwaco who has been dubbed the “crab engineer,” to ensure the makeshift



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

A decorated Jeep drives through the Ilwaco Crab Pot Christmas Tree lighting in 2020.

creation is structurally sound. The crab pots are donated by local fishermen, but they need to be in good enough shape so the

tree won’t collapse in stormy weather before Christmas.

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