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This year's twinkling lights will be blue and yellow, to honor the local fishing industry.

A metal anchor sits near the bottom of the structure, in honor of Kevin Soule, a 39-year-old crabber who died while fishing on Willapa Bay in 2018. A float on the tree honors Luke Jensen, a 22-year-old killed in a fishing accident in 2012. Another float gives gratitude to the U.S. Coast Guard crew working at Cape Disappointment.

"I think it's pretty cool to incorporate the fisherman we lost," added longtime volunteer and local artist Don Nesbitt, as he secured another string of lights to the structure.

According to local legend, Ilwaco is home to the tallest crab pot tree in the world, however, the city doesn't yet have the Guinness World Record to prove it. According to Austin, smaller trees have since popped up in Garibaldi, Rockaway Beach and Anacortes, Washington.

Austin says the nearby competition actually improves Ilwaco's chances of making the record books.

"Our understanding is that if other people are also making crab pot trees, then we might actually be able to get a title," laughed Austin.

The tree will be officially lit Saturday with a lighting ceremony and parade just as unique as the tree itself. Matt the DJ Elf will spin music starting at 4 p.m. and a parade of decorated vehicles, including the Long Beach Jeep Club, will make their way past the tree before it is lit at 5 p.m. The lighting will be capped off with the "World's Shortest Fireworks Display."

After a year of hiatus, carolers will be back to sing in person for the tree lighting.

"We sing traditional Christmas carols with a crab pot twist," said Austin. "We sing songs like 'fa la la, we want crab.'"

Santa will be on site strictly for drive-by visits, a change made last year due to COVID-19. Austin said the change is tough, but she's happy that some version of the celebration is still happening.

"It was super exciting when a lot of events had been canceled and we were able to come up with a parade idea last year," said Austin. "I know it meant a lot to our community."

While some features of the annual tradition will be modified to continue to follow social distancing recommendations, organizers strive to make the event interactive and fun for everyone.

"We have at least 20 jeeps that will be in the parade, and about 80 who are interested on social media," said Long Beach Jeep Club co-organizer Katherine Wilhelm.

Wilhelm said the participants are aiming



Nikki Davidson

Jenna Austin supervises as volunteers decorate the Crab Pot Christmas Tree.



Memorial floats honor local lives lost at sea.

to impress, going above and beyond with their lighted parade decorations.

"This year I've got an inflatable Santa that rides on the top on his stomach, riding a sled like a toboggan," she said. "I love it. I love the whole hometown event and everyone coming out and having community spirit."

"A lot of little neighborhoods surrounding us don't do much," she added. "Ilwaco goes all out and it takes a lot of effort, a lot of people work to make everyone happy."

The Traveling Coast Show podcast will release an episode with crab pot Christmas carols. Download the episode and find more information about the Crab Pot Christmas event at facebook.com/DiscoverIlwaco.



Nikki Davidson

Artist Don Nesbitt climbs to the top of the Crab Pot Christmas Tree to secure lights.

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