

APPLICATION



City Name City of Indianola

Population Under 10,000 Over 10,000

Category Public Safety Planning & Economic Development

City Spirit Public Works

Title of Entry Restoration of Vintage City Christmas Decorations

Description of Project In 2015 the Indianola Christmas decorations had long ago, seen better days. Disposing of the current decorations was out of the question and funds were not available to send them off for restorations or purchase new decorations. We knew it would be time consuming, yet with volunteers we could restore them ourselves. Over several months, in 2016, 35 were completed for Christmas, and the other 41 were completed, for Christmas 2017.

Project Summary (use additional pages if necessary) _____

Signature of Chief Elected or Appointed Official Steve Rosenthal, Mayor

Please provide the following information in case of questions about the application.

Contact Name Robin Rosenthal

Title Director "Keep Indianola Beautiful"

Address 112 South Martin Luther King Junior Drive

City Indianola, MS Zip 38751

Phone 504-919-1328 Email kib@indianolams.gov

Project Summary:

When the decision to refurbish the City Christmas decorations was made through, Keep Indianola Beautiful, we embarked on a rewarding project. Using my skills from sewing, I measured the materials, maximized the yardage and Mayor Rosenthal researched the companies to order materials. We restored a few to get the technique down, then set out to recruit volunteers from civic clubs, youth groups, and civic minded citizens. The local newspaper assisted us in recruiting volunteers with news stories about the refurbishing project and follow up articles.

Public works delivered the tattered decorations to the Mayor's home where we operated on sheer ingenuity, using the front porch, carport, and the back screened porch. The workshops lasted several months, with youth groups, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Garden Club, Boy and Girl Scouts, and other wonderful citizens. Keep Indianola Beautiful (KIB), purchased bolt cutters and the city purchased the light harnesses, zip ties, garland, electric cords, electrical tape, wire nuts, and lights.

Teams stripped the decorations down to bare metal rebar. Another team re-attached the light harness, and the next group attached the garland. The Mayor taught teams to connect the electrical cord, and others installed the bulbs. Every available space on the porches and carport was used. Occasionally a decoration would have to be sent back to Public Works to re-weld a junction. The first 35 decorations were ready for Christmas 2016. Although the Mayor and I together could complete one, from start to finish, in an hour, it took longer for the students. One high school student working off a traffic fine said, "this is a lot of fun". He meant it! We discovered there were more decorations than we were originally told since they had not been used because they were in such poor condition.

Beginning in Summer of 2017, during a re-election campaign, and a new grandchild, we began work on the other 41. Again, we worked at the Mayor's home over several months, with the volunteers, the addition of Summer Youth workers on rainy days, high school students working on

service hours, and some fine workers. The older decorations took longer to take apart than those made 10 to 15 years later, because of the materials used in their assembly. The Santa Faces took three times longer to take apart and rebuild. These old decorations are sturdier than those sold today because they were made with heavy rebar. The 41 additional decorations were ready for Christmas 2017.

It took, about 400 hours spread over several months for two years, with about 75 volunteers and roughly \$4000.00. The total cost for this great project was approximately \$53.00 per decoration. The lowest estimate to refurbish these decorations was around \$400 per decoration, delivered. The total cost of the project completed by a decoration company to the same quality would have been around \$28,000, a savings of \$24,000 using volunteer labor. Simpler new style pole decorations were in the \$250.00 to \$350.00 range. The project was worth giving up the use of our porches and carport for months at a time.

Whereas only 35 of the dilapidated Christmas tree pole decorations had previously been used, we not only had beautifully restored decoration, but were able to double the number that lined the streets around town.

Additional supports had to be ordered and some additional electric sockets had to be installed to accommodate the additional locations.

We also found 6 Santa faces that we refurbished and placed by pre-schools, the elementary school and a playground. The children and the teachers were tickled to see Santa at the entrance to the schools and playground.

Christmas spirit was everywhere. The volunteers who had put so many hours into the project were excited to see their work on display. Students would tell their friends that they had a part in the restoration project.

Because it appeared unbelievable, I was asked by friends of some of these young volunteers if they really did work on the decorations. The enthusiastic pride of the volunteers was awesome.

City employees got into the act by assisting the city welder in building a 25-foot Christmas tree for a downtown park. Red bows, costing \$1500.00 were purchased by the city to adorn the antique lights, with plans to add garland next year. First Methodist Church donated a 10ft tree to

City Hall when a parishioner upgraded theirs. With a few minor repairs, City Hall finally had a tree befitting the space.

As a thank you to the city employees for their extra time decorating the city, KIB and the Mayor organized and served a Christmas dinner.

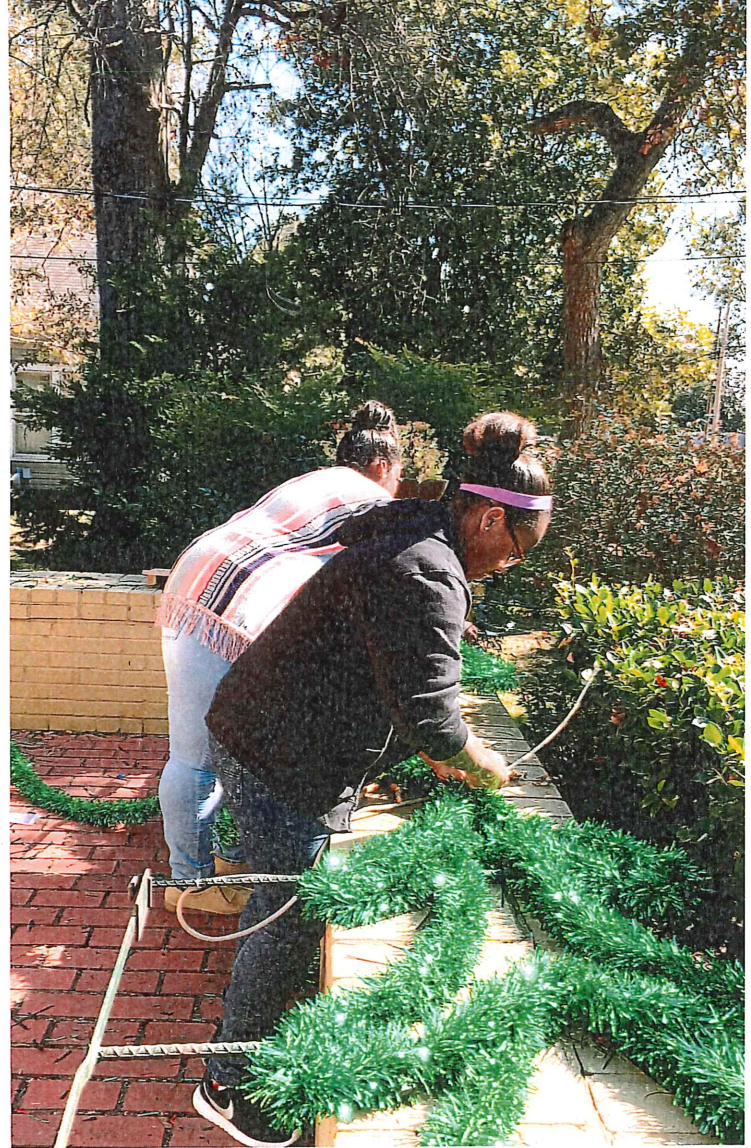
Undertaking a project to completely refurbish 76, five to six-foot, city decorations with new wire harnesses, and garland, at the Mayor's home, over several months for two years, while depending on volunteers, may seem overwhelming to most people. Did I mention that most of the volunteers were children? The time spent with the students, the interaction between the adults and the students working together, the satisfaction of a job well done, and the delight of the citizens of Indianola, was and is still the most rewarding and valuable part of the project. Citizens all over town enjoyed increased Christmas spirit due to the increase of decorations placed in areas that had never been decorated before. Many citizens came forward after the Christmas season asking about the next phase and what could they do to participate.

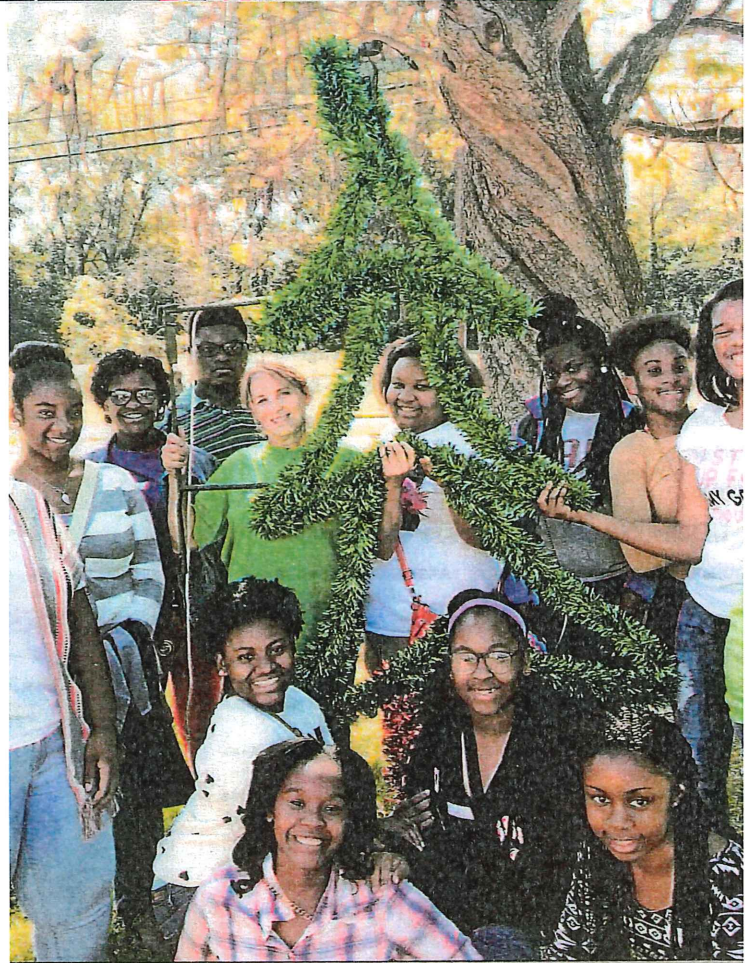
Sprucing up for holidays

Robin Rosenthal, who spearheaded the Keep Indianola Beautiful campaign, is launching another effort to make the city more attractive: reviving the city's ragged Christmas decorations. A restored one is seen on the left and an old one on the right. Rosenthal told the Rotary Club Tuesday that she had 45 trees to do and it takes about an hour each. Rotarian Malika Polk-Lee said the B.B. King Museum's youth ambassadors would volunteer Saturday to get the trees ready for the Christmas season. Rosenthal said a four-person crew is the best way to do it.









Ambassadors refurbish Christmas trees

Large Building Ambassadors completed their first community service project for the year by refurbishing Christmas trees. Members of the youth leadership program along with Ambassador Coordinator Tiffa Gray hung the Christmas trees throughout town. Front row, from left, are Ericaneisha Wall, Tiffa Gray, Journey Gray, Fakeidranique Rice, Jakayla Griffin, Jakeirra Griffin, and Jakala Riley. Back row, Aalivah Patton, Dvnesha Ginn, Alexia Brock and Mviesha Smith.







