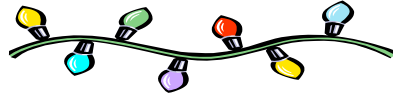


FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



THE STORY OF THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Where It All Started

For 18 years, **Auntie Josie Chansky** delighted the residents of Kauai with the gorgeous Christmas decorations at her home in Kapaa on Kawaihau Road. “**The Kapaa Christmas House,**” as it was known, was brightly lit from the ground to the rooftop. It was a magical wonderland and over the years thousands of adults, children, local residents and visitors from all over the world came to visit.

What made her decorations so special was that Josie was able to turn ‘trash into treasure’. Her one-of-a-kind constructions were made from a rich collection of recycled materials including flash cubes, toothpicks, beer caps, soda cans and egg cartons along with natural objects such as seedpods and pine cones. With care, originality and lots of love these everyday materials came together to create delightfully ingenious decorations.

When her husband died in early 1996, Josie was unable to put up her lights and decorations. Although many offered to help, she was grieving from her husband’s passing, and did not have the spirit to continue. She was determined to immediately sell off her decorations at a garage sale. **Elizabeth Freeman**, an island resident recognized that if the decorations were sold individually and never seen together again, Kauai would lose a remarkably special tradition. To make sure the Chansky magic would continue to delight the community for generations she went to Auntie Josie’s garage sale and purchased close to half of the collection and Josie donated the rest.

Elizabeth then donated the entire collection to the County of Kauai. Mayor Maryanne Kusaka gratefully accepted the Chansky creations and asked Elizabeth, an art director and designer by trade with a background in producing large scale events, if she would take charge of designing and coordinating the installation, a task she has continued as a volunteer to this day.

The Historic County Building was chosen as the perfect site to showcase the decorations. In December 1997 The Festival of Lights became a reality and launched a Kauai tradition!

The Festival of Lights: Elizabeth's Legacy

As an artist and designer Elizabeth Freeman was intent on creating a world of magical beauty for children and families. Freeman founded the event in 1997 and over the years as art director and producer of the Festival of Lights she has showcased Auntie Josie's unique Folk Art, created new decorations and displays and designed and overseen the delightful "Kauai-style" ornaments crafted by volunteers to fashion a Holiday tradition for Kauai uniquely her own.

Annually, Freeman oversees over a hundred volunteers, coordinating the gorgeous light display that goes up in the Historic County Building Park, overseeing the restoration of Auntie Josie's fragile creations (some nearly 50 years old) as well as teaching students and other volunteers how to "up-cycle" trash into fabulous ornaments and later share the story inside the Historic County Building.

From 1997 to the present attendance has grown from 400 to 4000 residents and visitors who come to enjoy the dazzling display inside the Historic County Building throughout the month of December. Thousands more enjoy the gorgeous lights in the Historic County Building Park which is up until the New Year.

Come On By...It's Free!

From the 1st Friday in December through the New Year the Lights in the Historic County Building Park glow every night. The Festival of Lights "Kauai-style" interior display is open **every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening from 6-8 PM through Christmas Eve with Santa and Mrs. Claus with a final evening the last weekend in December. And it's all Free!**

The Festival of Lights is sponsored by the County of Kauai, the Hawaii Tourism Authority, HouseMart Ace Hardware and Crafts, Oceanic Time Warner Cable and the Friends of the Festival of Lights.

It is truly a reflection of Kauai's Spirit of Aloha.

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