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WEST ROXBURY

Volunteers brighten West Roxbury thoroughfare after annual holiday decoration plans hit snag

Posted by Matt Rocheleau December 20, 2011 02:25 PM

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(Courtesy: State Rep. Ed Coppinger's office)

Keith Barry, a West Roxbury resident and a member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 103 in Dorchester, secured a truck from his union and, wearing a Santa Claus costume, helped hang wreaths along Centre Street on Friday night.

By **Matt Rocheleau**, Town Correspondent

Around this time of year for as long as he can remember, lifelong West

Roxbury resident Ed Coppinger was greeted with holiday warmth as the state representative would travel through his neighborhood's main business district. But this year, Centre Street was missing that familiar seasonal atmosphere.

While many business owners had adorned their storefronts along Centre Street with decorations, the thoroughfare itself was bare, until this past weekend.

"The warm weather fooled us for a bit this year, but then we realized that Christmas was just a couple weeks away and that nothing was going to be done," to decorate Centre Street, Coppinger said.

So, the local legislator led a campaign to cheer up his hometown's commercial hub. Last week, Coppinger and Leader Bank, where he works as a mortgage broker, split the \$1,000-plus cost of buying 90 wreaths and the same number of red bows.

On Friday night, Coppinger and a team of volunteers hung the ornaments using a bucket truck, which was donated by a local labor union and allowed them to fix the decorations atop every other light pole along Centre Street, and in some busy spots along each pole, from Spring Street to the neighborhood's police station.

"I have fond memories of it as a kid. It was really decked out – something on every light pole," he said. "It really just made it feel like Christmas."

In past years, the street holiday decorating had been organized and paid for by a business and professionals organization before the local Main Streets nonprofit took over the task several years ago.

But, a supply of lights purchased in recent years burned out sooner than expected and, with not enough funding available for replacement decorations, darkness befell this year's plans to carry on the tradition of brightening Center Street for the holidays.

"As we got closer to Christmas, I was surprised to see that Centre Street did not have any decorations to celebrate the season," Coppinger said. "I talked to many people who asked me why Centre Street did not reflect the Christmas season; so, I thought there was something we could do."

Keith Barry, a West Roxbury resident and a member of International

Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 103 in Dorchester, secured a truck from his union and, wearing a Santa Claus costume, helped hang the wreaths on Friday night.

Parkway residents, Mark McKeown, Anthony Castellano, a Catholic Memorial student and his father, Joe, also volunteered to help decorate Centre Street.

“Keith Barry was an incredible help and I could not have done it without him,” Coppinger said, adding of Castellano, that: “I think Anthony really reflects the kind of service to the community that CM strides to teach.”

Coppinger said he hopes to help lead a more extensive decorating operation next year and has been in talks with the neighborhood’s Main Streets organization about possibly holding a fund-raiser next summer or fall to purchase new, permanent holiday fixtures for Centre Street.

“If we want to encourage people to shop locally, I believe we should have decorations to help draw residents to our own shopping districts,” the state representative said.

“I am very grateful to Leader Bank and Local 103 for their help in making this happen,” he continued. “The generosity of the many people who helped us and all the others who offered their assistance demonstrates the type of community that West Roxbury is.”

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(Courtesy: State Rep. Ed Coppinger's office)

From left to right, State Rep. Ed Coppinger, Joe Castellano, Keith Barry, Mark McKeown and Catholic Memorial student Anthony Castellano all volunteered to hang decorations along West Roxbury's commercial center Friday night.

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