

# Glowing Guardians

HOLIDAY LIGHTS BRING CHEER TO FAMILIES IN NEED OF A BOOST OF HOPE.

*Story by Kasey Bowser  
Photographed by Chris Loomis*



Michele Swetesich

**Fast Fact:** To help reduce global warming effects and your electric bill this holiday season, consider purchasing LED (light-emitting diode) lights for use in decorating your home.

**W**HILE MOST FAMILIES are out decorating and shopping this time of year, some are grieving from the loss of a loved one or an unexpected circumstance beyond their control. During their tough times, Angels of Light helps some of these families “let a little bit of light in.”

This program coordinated by Night Art, an award-winning landscape and architectural lighting company, has been brightening up needy families’ homes during the holidays since 2004. Through Angels of Light, Night Art surprises a family on Thanksgiving Day to let them know they have been chosen and then decorates the exterior of their home, with the goal of cheering up the family in its time of need. “The whole idea is to take the family out of the pain that they are experiencing or the burden and allow them to have a time where they don’t have to worry,” says Michele Swetesich, president of Night Art. “Where they can enjoy each other’s company and [we can] just give them something else to focus on for a short period of time.”

## GET INVOLVED

Every year, you can nominate a family (including your own) that is going through circumstances beyond its control. You can obtain the nomination form online at [www.nightartaz.com](http://www.nightartaz.com) and mail it to **Angels of Light c/o Night Art, P.O. Box 30498, Phoenix, AZ 85046-0498**. Judges will decide on the winner in early November and schedule a time to decorate the home’s exterior.

The first family chosen for the Angels of Light program was the Reklaitis family, in 2004. During that year, the family’s four young children endured the loss of their mother, Shelly, to melanoma. “It was the first Christmas the kids had without their mom,” says Paul Reklaitis, Shelly’s husband. “If it wasn’t for [Angels of Light], we would’ve had a very sad and somber Christmas. I wasn’t even planning to put up a tree or lights that year.” Angels of Light decorated the Reklaitis household with more than 2,000 lights and other decorations.

“It really brought a lot of joy to our family,” says Reklaitis, whose family was also treated to a limo tour of Christmas lights across the Valley followed by a nice dinner. “It’s a simple program, hard to choose, but it’s a rewarding program,” says Swetesich. “Any family can be nominated, whether it is a family that has lost a loved one, or a family struggling to get back on their feet or whatever the case may be.” Swetesich started the program to bring a “positive light” to a family while they were going through rough times. “We wanted to give the family a break of the dark cloud that’s hanging over them,” says Swetesich. The smiles on the children’s faces proved that Angels of Light did, if only for a moment, shed some light. ■