

K of C sponsors Nativity contest

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

GATES — In these politically correct times, it's becoming harder and harder to make religious references in public places. Yet no such debate applies to private property — and a Knights of Columbus group hopes that homeowners will take full advantage of this privilege during the holiday season.

An effort known as "Keeping Christ in Christmas" is being staged by John Steger K of C Assembly No. 2297, from St. Jude's Parish in Gates. From Dec. 1 to Jan. 6, people who put up lighted Nativity displays in their front yards will be eligible to win cash prizes in a contest run by the assembly.

According to Alan Vieira, contest chairman, as many as three \$100 winners — depending on the number of entries — will be drawn at random. Vieira noted that unlike some Christmas decoration contests, this one doesn't emphasize glitziness.

"Some people may have a beauti-

ful, very elaborate display, but that's not our goal. The goal is to have as many displays as possible," said Vieira, a trustee with Assembly 2297. Other committee members are Sal Sorbello, Tony Salvati and Patrick Bovenzi, also from Assembly 2297; along with Agnes Falbo and Rosemary Costa, parishioners of St. Lawrence in Greece.

The contest has been promoted at a number of parishes in western Monroe County, although anyone in the county is eligible. "Maybe this will encourage people who have been thinking about it anyway to go out and purchase the scene," Vieira said, adding that Nativity scenes are available in area department stores.

Vieira said the idea for this contest stemmed from an article that appeared in the *National Catholic Register* this past summer encouraging such initiatives. "Our property is still ours, and we can decorate it any way we like, for any reason we like," wrote author Jennifer Roback Morse. "It is time for Catholics to



Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Antonio Chichi of Gates plans to enter his front-yard Nativity scene display in a contest sponsored by John Steger Knights of Columbus Assembly No. 2297.

take the lead in reclaiming Christmas as a holiday that people can celebrate and enjoy without looking over their shoulder for the sensitivity police."

Vieira agrees with Morse's viewpoint: "When I was growing up I never heard about this offending people. Now all of a sudden we're thinking we can't offend anyone by mentioning the word God. Before you know it, there won't be any mentions of God or Christ or anything outside of your own home," Vieira commented, citing the American Civil Liberties Union's effort to get "In God We Trust" removed from all currency, and the recent suspension of Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy S. Moore for refusing to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from the state judicial build-

ing.

For reasons such as these, erecting a Nativity display for this and future Christmases is "more important than putting up a tree," Vieira said, adding that the message being sent is also more significant than the cash prizes at stake.

"The \$100, it was just kind of an extra plum," Vieira said. "We wouldn't want people to get involved in this strictly because of the money issue. We hope that people would just do it basically to combat what's happening in our country today."

EDITOR'S NOTE: To become eligible for the Nativity display contest, send your name, address and phone number to Christmas Contest, c/o Alan Vieira, 102 Juliane Dr., Rochester, NY 14624.

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