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Berth of a nation

Shipyard lights up its Lake Macatawa dock in patriotic colors

By NATE REENS

Staff Writer

Months after area residents stopped erecting patriotic tributes to support those killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, workers at the Eldean Shipyard in Holland decided to re-light the interest.

Using about 5,000 bright red, white and blue Christmas lights, Tom Fierro and Norma Rininger turned an ordinary wooden gas dock, with 30 6-foot pilings on the sides, into a beaming display that illuminates the night sky on the Lake Macatawa side of The Piper restaurant.

Fierro and Rininger took the better part of two days to painstakingly string lights around the wooden poles, which boats tie up to while waiting to gas up before heading into Lake Michigan. The two also built a makeshift American flag, placing the luminous bulbs there as well.

"It's just something to remind us of 9-11," said Fierro, a Navy veteran who served in World War II and takes part in VFW color guards for celebrations and funeral services around Holland. "People should remember that day, and this was a way to do it."



A boat dock at Eldean's Shipyard is illuminated in patriotic colors.
Sentinel/Dan Irving



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Sitting on the second floor of The Piper or passing by on South Shore Drive, the eyes of diners and motorists are drawn to the lights, according to Rininger.

"I think people are riding by at night to take a look, and I've done it too," she said. "It makes me proud to see them out there."

The two Eldean employees erected the lights early this month -- "It was cold,

I know that much," Fierro said -- but the exhibit may not last long.

Merle Curtis said the spring boating season will arrive soon and the beacons will have to be taken down to accommodate boaters and the dock's foot traffic.

"You can only leave Christmas lights up so long," Fierro said.



LIGHTS: Tom Fierro, and Norma Rininger, employees of Eldean Marins, stand on the patriotic display on a dock behind The Piper restaurant.

Sentinel/Brian Forde
