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Dazzling sight: Floating parade

Boat Parade of Lights glides through Channel this weekend.

BY TONY RAAP

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The Nautical Inn's itinerary for Saturday's Parade of Lights reads like a MasterCard commercial. Twenty-five thousand Christmas lights: \$2,500. Seventy-five foot houseboat: \$325,000. Two hundred feet of water heater covering: \$200. Taking part in a boat parade: Priceless.

A nine-person team has worked more than 100 hours and spent nearly \$3,000 decorating its boat, said Jennifer Johnson, Nautical Inn's head of sales. "We created a big project for ourselves, but it's fun. It's a challenge," she said. The Nautical Inn is one of the parade's 45 entries, the most in the event's 24-year history, parade chairwoman Tammy Kastelz said. In all, 62 boats will be in the parade. Kastelz said about two-thirds of the boats are first-time entries. Mike and Brenda Boucher and Joe Prentice, who are entering a 56-foot houseboat, fall in that category. "We all thought it would be fun to come up and do this," Prentice said. "I think the fun's being in the parade. The kids enjoy it. It's something for them to talk about for a while." The London Bridge Yacht Club coordinated the event. It raised more than \$7,000, which was spent mostly on advertising and prize money. Cash awards ranging from \$200 to \$400 will be awarded for best use of lights, theme, color, etc. The yacht club will hold an awards brunch Sunday at Shugrue's Restaurant & Bar at 10:30 a.m. The Nautical Inn team has worked on its boat for more than two weeks. Decorating it was a good team-building activity, said Mimi Ayres, who works in the hotel's sales department. "It gets you to work together," she said. "It'll be a great sense of accomplishment when we're done, that's for sure." Buster Johnson, Mohave County Board of Supervisors District III representative, is the parade's grand marshal. His boat will lead the parade. Thirteen sailboats will bring up the caboose. Wally Lowe's sailboat will tow the other 12 with a rope and pulley. Lowe, who works as a ferryboat captain on the Dreamcatcher, said the boats would do circles and figure eights. "We do all kinds of things. People love it. They absolutely love seeing the boats," he said. Lowe said each sailboat took about six hours to decorate. There are about 2,000 lights on each. "I'm real excited. I can't wait. As long as the weather holds, it's going to be the best one we've ever had," he said.