Bruce and Marjorie Nickle or is it...?

Citizens of the Year Idell Jan 29/90

Quinte Jaycees honor city's Christmas couple

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By CHRIS MALETTE
Staff Reporter

Bruce and Marjorie Nickle raised a glass to toast each other on being named Citizens of the Year by the Quinte Jaycees at Saturday's Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce annual dinner.

But, the Nickles did so under the balmy skies of Florida, where the couple is vacationing — just as last year's recipient Ben Corke did when his name was called to receive the award.

Despite their absence, the Nickles got a rousing hand from the almost 200 people at Saturday's dinner for their community spirit in making Christmas brighter for the people of Belleville and area.

The Nickles always take Christmas seriously. Since 1981, the Marsh Drive couple have lit up their street with the dazzling Christmas lights display that they took over from Donald and Rita Foster.

The display was started by Don and Rita Foster in 1959 on Emily Street as a tribute to their son, Bil-

ly, who was killed in an accident the previous year.

This March, when the Nickles return home from their southern vacation, work will begin on next Christmas display.

Bruce Nickle estimates more than 5,000 people visit their display on Christmas Eve alone.

Throughout the Christmas season, Bruce and Marjorie dress up as the most convincing Santa and Mrs. Claus for appearances at their home display and other functions.

Dwayne Barratt, who made the presentation on behalf of the Jaycees Saturday to the Nickles' nephew, praised the community spirit of the couple.

"This past Christmas," noted Barratt, "the Nickles appeared at as many as 65 functions for various groups as Santa and Mrs. Claus."

Bruce Nickle, said Barratt, has been appearing locally as Santa Claus for about 30 years.

The Jaycees have been honoring those in the community for contributions to life in Belleville since 1963, said Barratt.