

# Policeman's Ball benefits community

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
April 24 2016 7:35 PM



**ALTON** - The 80<sup>th</sup> annual **Policeman's Ball**, facilitated by the **Police Benevolent and Protective Association Unit #14** (PB and PA), was a chance for the police patrolling the streets to give back to those they protect.

The event was held Saturday, April 24, at the **Argosy** in Alton. Several local businesses, elected officials, community members and police officers enjoyed a night of dinner, auctions and giving back to the community. The money raised by the ball went to helping the **Alton Police Department's** community-based programs including food basket giveaways, the Christmas **Shop with a Cop** initiative and the **Alton Police Youth Camp** located on Lockhaven Road in Godfrey.

“It's a phenomenal event,” **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** said. “It's another fine example of men and women patrolling the streets giving back. We couldn't have a better department.”

Besides the money going back into police-sponsored programs, the PB and PA gave checks worth \$1,000 to three community advocacy groups. The first check was given to **Mary Brand**, the Executive Director of the **Crisis Food Center** in Alton.

**Andrew Pierson**, the President of the PB and PA Unit 14, said the Crisis Food Center was able to fill 8,534 grocery orders in 2015, which resulted in approximately 256,000 meals, including 499 kid boxes for children in the summer.



Another \$1,000 check was given to **Pat Schwarte** of **Riverbender.com** for the **Riverbender Community Center**. Pierson praised the center's existence, citing it as a safe and constructive place for children to go in the community.

A final presentation from the PB and PA was to **Madison County States Attorney Tom Gibbons** for the **Madison County Child Advocacy Center (CAC)**. The Madison County CAC interviews alleged victims of sexual assault who are children. Pierson said the center interviewed more than 120 Alton children in 2015.

Upon accepting the check, Gibbons praised the work of the various police departments in the county in assisting with the CAC.

“Over the last 10 years, police working with the CAC have allowed years in prison for these terrible offenders to skyrocket,” he said after being presented with the check.

A last minute gift concluded the presentation ceremony. **Former Alton Police Chief David Hayes** gave a check for \$1,000 to the Alton Police Department on behalf of his late father, who worked part time for the department.

“It was an honor to receive that on his behalf,” Pierson said.

A live auction followed the presentation ceremony.

Current **Alton Police Chief Jake Simmons** said the event was created entirely by the rank-and-file police officers to perpetuate their community-oriented programs.

“I have nothing to do with it outside of attending it and promoting it when I can,” he said.

More information about the PB and PA unit 14 can be found on its Facebook page. Pierson encouraged everyone to “like” it, so they may keep track of future community events sponsored by the organization.