

United Way's Community Christmas seeks partners to host donation boxes

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EAST ALTON — The United Way's annual Community Christmas donation drive is looking for partners to host donation boxes and collect items for those in need during the holidays. The program kicks off on Tuesday, Nov. 1, when dozens of participating businesses, schools and churches throughout the Riverbend will receive donation boxes.

A business can serve as a donation drop-off location by requesting one or more boxes to place within their location, accessible for clients, visitors or employees to drop off

items. The boxes are provided courtesy of Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery and are of no cost. Those interested in receiving a box can visit www.helpingpeople.org/box to submit a request.

Martha Morse, business development representative of 1st MidAmerica Credit Union and United Way's 2016 Community Christmas Committee chair, said, "The need in our community is significant and we are asking the Riverbend area to come together to help our neighbors have a brighter holiday season. Along with toys, this year we have a great need for basic items such as non-perishable food, new coats, diapers and blankets."

Donations will be accepted through Dec. 15 and include non-perishable food items, new clothes for all ages, including gloves, hats and scarves, blankets, towels, baby care items, hygiene items, cleaning supplies and new toys. Monetary donations are also accepted and can be made online at www.helpingpeople.org/christmas2016 or mailed to United Way at 707 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 270, East Alton, IL 62024 and marked as Attn: Community Christmas.

Last year, Community Christmas collected over 23,000 items for the community. Donations received this year will go to support the following 15 local agencies to help those in need:

Boys and Girls Club of Alton

Caritas Family Solutions

Catholic Charities of Madison County

Catholic Children's Home

Centerstone

Children's Home and Aid

Crisis Food Center, Inc.

Illinois Center for Autism

Lutheran Child & Family Services

Oasis Women's Center

Operation Blessing

Riverbend Community Food Pantry

Riverbend Family Ministries

Riverbend Head Start & Family Services

The Salvation Army – Alton

Dawna Gilbreath, Community Christmas coordinator, noted, “These organizations greatly rely on the donations from the program to help families and individuals in the area have a great holiday season.”

Besides needing businesses and organizations to host donation boxes, volunteers are needed for a variety of activities are also essential to the success of Community Christmas. Volunteer opportunities include prepping the boxes on Oct. 31, delivering boxes to host sites on Nov. 1 and 2, picking up donations on Dec. 15, and sorting and loading the thousands of items donated for pick-up by the agencies on Dec. 15 and 16.

For those interested in hosting a box, volunteering or for more information, call the Southwest Illinois Division of United Way of Greater St. Louis at (618) 258-9800.