



Community Christmas program now collecting for Riverbend community

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EAST ALTON — United Way's 27th annual Community Christmas donation drive began last week when donation boxes were delivered to dozens of participating businesses, churches, schools and organizations throughout the RiverBend area. The program, presented by United Way, is collecting items through December 14 for local people in need this holiday season. To locate a donation box near you, visit www.helpingpeople.org/christmas2016.

This year, the top needs in the community are for new blankets, towels, household items and diapers. Other items collected through the program include non-perishable food items, new and unwrapped toys for kids of all ages, new clothes, coats and winter essentials like socks, hats, gloves and scarves, baby formula and personal care items. All of the items collected will go to 15 local agencies, who've estimated needs this holiday season for more than 8,000 people in the Riverbend community.

In addition to collecting items, monetary donations are also accepted and will be used to purchase items on the donation list that are in short supply or not collected. Donations can be made online at www.helpingpeople.org/christmas2016 or can be sent to United Way at 707 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 270, East Alton, IL 62024, marked Attn: Community Christmas.

“United Way’s Community Christmas program is really important to many people and families during the holiday season, especially this year with such great need in our community,” said Martha Morse, 2016 chair for Community Christmas Committee and business development representative for 1st MidAmerica Credit Union. “Last year, Community Christmas collected more than 23,000 items for people throughout the RiverBend area. We need the community to step up again and help us to provide a brighter holiday season for so many.”

Freer Auto Body’s Christmas in July event, hosted by the Freer family, has already raised more than \$33,000 for this year’s program. Over the next month, there are also several events in the community benefitting the Community Christmas:

- Sunday, November 28 at Christmas Wonderland in Alton. Individuals can bring an item to donate to United Way’s Community Christmas and receive free admission to Christmas in Wonderland from 5:00 until 9:00 p.m.
- Thursday, December 8, 2016 at Freer Auto Body for Cookies and Cocoa. The Freer family will be collecting new toys and coats for Community Christmas, while providing patrons with homemade cookies and hot cocoa.

In addition to donating items, volunteers are needed for a variety of opportunities, including shopping for toys and other items, picking up donation-filled boxes, and sorting and loading thousands of items for pick-up by the agencies.

For those interested in donating items, hosting a box, volunteering or for more information, visit www.helpingpeople.org/christmas2016.

About United Way of Greater St. Louis

United Way of Greater St. Louis mobilizes the community with one goal in mind — helping people live their best possible lives. Located throughout 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois, United Way helps one in three people in the region build a foundation for a good quality of life through basic needs, education, financial stability, health and strong communities. For more information, contact 314-421-0700 or visit www.HelpingPeople.org.

