

Tree-lighting ceremony to officially kick off holiday season in Downtown Alton

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in Downtown Alton.

The city is gearing up for the **22nd Annual Tree-Lighting Ceremony**, which will take place at 6 p.m. on **Friday, Nov. 18**, at **Lincoln-Douglas Square** off Market Street. Before the tree can be lit, the fearless members of the **Alton/Godfrey Rotary Club** climbed up the metal framework of the tree to assemble it early this week.

Dennis Wilson, Art Williams, Sam Stemm, Don Moyer, Chuck Norman, Larry Thompson, John Keller, Tom Zigrang, Don Emde, Jim White, Ron Mayhew, Gary Ayres and Pete Zimmer, all Rotary Club Members, made sure that the tree went up safely in all of its glory early Monday morning.

In conjunction with **Alton Main Street**, the annual ceremony brings together the community in one of the most unique ways.

Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street, is excited to see everyone who comes out the event this Friday.

"Downtown Alton is the setting for a lot of shared memories in our community, and it's awesome to see how excited the kids get about this tradition," she said. "We hope that everyone can come down to visit with Santa and join in the countdown to lighting up the tree."

As McGibany mentioned, Santa and Mr. Claus himself will be available to hear the community's children's Christmas wishes while carolers from the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) sing holiday tunes for guests. Several speakers will take the stage before **Alton Mayor Brant Walker** flips the magic switch to officially ring in the holiday season in Downtown Alton.

After the ceremony, community members are invited to come to the **RiverBender.com Community Center** for a night of free family fun in the center's **Annual Holiday Open House**, which lasts from 7 to 10 p.m. Friday evening.

