

As cold snap arrives, tree-lighting kicks off Christmas season in Downtown Alton

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
November 19 2016 7:08 AM



[SEE RELATED VIDEO BELOW:](#)

ALTON – In the words of Edna Ferber, “Christmas isn’t a season. It’s a feeling.”

In that case, the feeling was truthfully mutual within the hearts of several Altonians at **Friday evening's 22nd annual Tree-Lighting Ceremony in Downtown Alton.**

Earlier in the day, a cold snap that lead everyone around the area to reach for their thick winter coats instead of the light jackets they came quite accustomed to over the last few weeks had people bundled up and begging for some sort of warmth.

Luckily, the **Salvation Army of Army** were providing warmth by the cupful with free hot cocoa while carolers from local Girl Scout troops sang the Christmas classics to get everyone in the holiday spirit. Santa and Mrs. Claus themselves took shelter from the cold and met with some young boys and girls who shared what they hope to find in their stockings and under the tree on Christmas morning.



“The Tree-Lighting Ceremony is the best,” **Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street**, said. “It kicks off the holiday season. We always have it the Friday before Thanksgiving and it’s always really good kickoff event to remind everybody to shop local in Downtown Alton. We have a lot of people who have shared memories from their whole family in Downtown Alton over the years and we want to keep those traditions going strong.”

Sam Stemm, the evening's MC, thanked all the program's sponsors and introduced the night's speakers, including **Alton Main Street President Debby Edelman**, **Mike Adams of Lifehouse Community Church**, **Alton-Godfrey Rotary President Gary Ayres**, **Salvation Army Lieutenants Bryan and Teri Ellison** as well as **Alton Mayor Brant Walker**.

Along with lighting up the now 20-year-old Christmas tree, donated by the Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club, which towers over **Lincoln-Douglas Square**, the ceremony serves as the kick off for the **Salvation Army Tree of Lights** campaign. **Godfrey Mayor Mike McCormick and his wife, Linda**, were named the chairs of this year's campaign.

If it surely didn't feel like Christmas with the cold temperatures and strong, piercing wind whistling through the air, it certainly did after Mayor Walker recruited the help of children in the audience to help count down to the moment the tree finally illuminated. Over 1,000 lights glowed bright in the Alton landscape, ringing in the Christmas season in the historic area.

[SEE RELATED GALLERY BELOW:](#)

