

Salvation Army B(rings) in December with a bang

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ALTON - As the calendar turns, the Salvation Army – Alton Corps is preparing for a very busy December.

Holly Allen, Social Service Director, emphasized “Thursday, December 1 is going to be our third Christmas Assistance sign-up day and last Health and Service Fair of the year.” Allen continued, “Saturday’s event will be from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the evening at the Corps offices on Alby Street.” Allen remarked, “We have offered a variety of times for registration this year in an attempt to make it as convenient on our clients as possible.” She added, “A special opportunity to visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus and even get a free photo will be offered to those who come on Thursday to register.”

According to Salvation Army records, over 100 families have already registered this season. There is also still time for groups, individuals, businesses to participate in the Army's Angel Tree or Adopt-a-Family program and may get additional information by calling Ms. Allen at 618-465-7764.

The Tree of Lights and Red Kettle Campaign are also getting creative as the calendar turns to December. Two very special Bell Ringing opportunities are being organized through some unexpected collaborations. As the Alton Corps staff was creatively planning on how to make up for not being able to ring bells at Schnucks (as was the case up until 2 weeks ago), contact was made with Rose Lammers about the possibility of having Red Kettles at the ABOB craft fair.

While this request was working its way through ABOB and School District Channels, Red Kettle Coordinator, Greg Gelzinnis was contacted by a Team Member from the Alton Target store that said they would like to ring to support their community (even though corporately Target does not allow bell ringing at their stores).

According to Mercedes Greenwood, one of the Alton Target Managers, "Being visible in, and supportive of, our local community is very important to our Team Members, and if Greg could get it worked out for us to ring at ABOB, we were anxious to do our part." Gelzinnis was happy to call this past week to inform Ms. Greenwood that he had received approval from ABOB and Saturday, December 3 would be the date.

Mrs. Lammers, shared, "While the Salvation Army's request was not routine for us, we believe in their work in our community and were happy to be a part of this unique collaboration." ABOB offered the opportunity for the Army to ring at both entrances and so Gelzinnis reached out to a brand new organization, the Alton Giant Vintage Baseball Club to help fully take advantage of ABOB's generous offer.

According to Giant team member & club treasurer, Mike "Red" McCauley, "Our club has appreciated all the support that the Alton community gave us during our inaugural season and we are happy to give back."

McCauley added, "In fact, one of our team members received service from the Salvation Army, and we certainly are big fans of their work...ringing the bells for a few hours is the least we could do." Target Team Members and Alton Giant players will be present during Saturday's show hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Another special Bell Ringing opportunity is being organized by the Bush Pilots Motorcycle Club at Fast Eddies on Saturday, December 3 & 10 from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

According to Bush Pilots' representative, Raymond Davenport, "We appreciate Eddie Jr. allowing us to ring at Fast Eddies." Davenport continued, "This has become an annual tradition for our club members and we very much support the Salvation Army – Alton Corps and their work in our community."

Davenport also added, "We hope other Clubs in the area will consider ringing or will come out and support our efforts at Eddie's these next 2 Saturdays."

Gelzinnis remarked, "Friday will mark our first official week of bell ringing and we are off to a good start, but there are still plenty of "open slots" and opportunities for individuals or groups to do their part in insuring that we have a successful campaign and reach that \$85,000.00 campaign goal."

Those interested may go to www.ringbells.org and register on-line or may call the Salvation Army office and ask for Greg and he will be happy to assist anyone register. The Annual Campaign runs through December 24 at 2:00 p.m. Residents can also follow the progress of the campaign by driving by the Alton Corps offices at 525 Alby Street and watching the tree light and the thermometer rise.

For Additional Information on ABOB: Rose Lammers – 618-259-5346

For Additional Information on Target: Mercedes Greenwood – 618-465-4950

For Additional Information on Salvation Army Christmas Assistance – Holly Allen – 618-465-7764

For Additional Information on Red Kettle Campaign – Greg Gelzinnis – 618-465-7764 or Cell at 618-550-9291