

What to know about the weather, from Murray the Alton Groundhog

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Dozens gathered outside the **Alton Visitors Bureau**, located at 200 Piasa St., Thursday morning to ask an expert about the future of weather in the Riverbend.

Will we see an early spring or be doomed to six more weeks of winter? The brisk breeze chilled the ungloved fingers of all in attendance, seeming to bring a sort of ominous foreshadowing to the answer from nature's beloved oracle, but the sun was also at full shine above the crowd's mostly capped heads. All were awaiting the determination of a furry little prophet named **Murray the Groundhog**.

Prior to unleashing Murray and his knowledge of winter's fate, local mayors, **Alan Winslow** from **Bethalto**, **Joe Silkwood** from **East Alton** and **Mike McCormick** of **Godfrey** joined **Alton Mayor Brant Walker**, who donned a top hat for the occasion, as he read an official mayoral proclamation celebrating both Murray the Groundhog, and his keepers, the **TreeHouse Wildlife Center**, located in **Dow**. [Video of the ceremony can be found here.](#)



Volunteers from TreeHouse Wildlife Center take and rehabilitate wild native American animals with the intention of releasing them back into the wild. When it came time for Murray to be released, however, he jumped into the arms of **Rachael Heaton**, who released him Thursday morning, just after 9 a.m. When he hopped into her arms, she knew he would be one of the rare TreeHouse Wildlife Center rehabilitation success stories who stayed. It was almost as if he had accepted his destiny to foretell the coming of seasons.

Much like his fellow meteorologist, **Punxsutawney Phil**, Murray saw his shadow upon release and shuffled his way back into his carrying cage, thus predicting another six weeks of winter, or as **Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Brett Stawar** optimistically said, "six more weeks of eagle-watching weather."

Following the ceremony, everyone was invited into the visitors center to enjoy cookies and coffee courtesy of the Alton Convention and Visitors Bureau.

