

# Grandpa Gang donates to community

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*Over 50 organizations receive donations from Christmas Wonderland*

ALTON - Visitors poured into Christmas Wonderland in near record numbers in 2016 and that success means financial gifts to area organizations have increased.

Over \$40,000 in donations has been distributed to more than 50 civic organizations courtesy of the Grandpa Gang and Christmas Wonderland, a direct result of strong holiday seasonal visitors to the landmark Alton attraction.

The annual event, spearheaded by the volunteer Grandpa Gang, features more than 4 million lights strung throughout Rock Spring Park, visits with Santa Claus in the Enchanted Forest and carriage rides through the park.

“We are so pleased with the support Christmas Wonderland has received,” head Grandpa Al Cowgill said. “That support means we can help others in our surrounding communities and that is the true meaning of the holiday season.”

Area organizations receiving financial donations from Christmas Wonderland include:

1st Presbyterian Church  
5A's Animal Shelter  
AHS National Honor Society  
AHS Orchestra  
Alton Amphitheater Commission  
Alton Boys & Girls Club  
Alton Fireworks Committee  
Alton Godfrey Rotary Club  
Alton Optimist Club  
Alton Park & Recreation  
Alton School District  
Backstoppers  
Behavior Alternatives  
Bethalto Boys & Girls Club  
Beverly Farms Foundation  
Boots on the Green  
Boy Scout Troop #1  
Crisis Food Center  
Cub Scout Pack 3001  
East Alton #13 School District  
East Alton American Legion-Scholarship Fund  
East Alton Rotary  
East End Improvement  
Friends of Haskell  
Evergreen Place  
Gordon Moore Restoration  
Girl Scout Troop #71  
Grafton United Methodist Church  
Hope Community Center  
Hope Rescue  
Impact  
Land of Lincoln Honor Flights  
Mississippi Valley Christian School  
Montessori School  
North Alton Godfrey Business Council  
Oasis Women's Center  
Otter Creek Historical Society  
Phi Tau Omega Society  
Power of the Giraffe  
Pride, Inc.  
Riverbend Animal Shelter

Riverbend Community Center  
Riverbend Head Start  
River of Life Youth  
Royal Family Kids Camp/Cornerstone Church  
Salvation Army  
Senior Services Plus  
St. Vincent De Paul Society  
ToddleTowne  
ToddleTowne Learning Center  
Wreaths Across America  
YWCA

As part of the annual holiday event, area organizations also vie for top honors in the annual Christmas Tree Decorating contest in the Enchanted Forest. The contest is judged by visitors to the park. This year's first place winner is Girl Scout Troop #71. Second Place went to Montessori School. Third Place was awarded to ToddleTowne. Also participating in the contest were: Alton High Biology Club, Alton High National Honor Society, Alton High Robotics Club, Alton High Thespian Troup, Bethalto Girl Scouts, Bethalto University, Civic Memorial Trap Team, Cub Scout Pack #1, E.A.W.R. High Interact Club, East Elementary, Eastwood Elementary Student Council, Eunice Smith Elementary, Girl Scout Troop #725, Girl Scout Troop #834, Lovejoy Elementary, North Elementary Student Council, Roxana Jr. High Student Council, St. Ambrose Student Council, St. Norbert's 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. Peter & Paul Student Council, Thelma Terrace, and William BeDell ARC.

The "Grandpa Gang", a group of retirees and volunteers, organizes and designs the Christmas spectacular of cascading lights, tunnels and displays known as Christmas Wonderland. Each evening during the holiday season, the park sparkles against the night sky with millions of glistening lights, all hung by volunteers and the "gang." Christmas Wonderland warms the hearts and helps families and friends capture the holiday spirit. Each year, the Grandpa Gang takes time to give back to the community with a portion of the attraction's seasonal revenue donated to local charities.