



Less Than Two Weeks Remain for Annual Community Christmas

November 30 2012 8:47 AM

WOOD RIVER, IL - Less than two weeks remain in United Way's annual Community Christmas donation drive for the Riverbend community. As Christmas draws near, time is running out to bring in any donations to one of more than 140 boxes placed in businesses throughout the community and surrounding areas. The boxes will remain in stores for donations until Thursday, December 13, when they will be picked up for sorting and then supplied to receiving agencies.

Donations to be placed in the boxes include non-perishable food items, new clothes for all ages, new winter weather necessities like gloves, hats and scarves, blankets, baby care items, hygiene items, and new toys. Items received will go to 14 local agencies to help those in need of these items during the holiday season. Many of these organizations greatly depend on the donations from United Way's Community Christmas to help those in the area have a great holiday.

All the items and monetary donations for Community Christmas stay right here in the area to help local families in need. Mary Jo Kratschmer, Community Christmas chair, participated in the event last year and said, "As I helped sort donations from local businesses, churches, and organizations, I imagined how happy some little girl was going to be to get that Barbie doll, how relieved a new mother would be to get that pack of diapers. I hope those who donate know the good they are doing and that their donations stay in our community. They help make Christmas for many, many people."

Two area businesses are hosting special events that will benefit Community Christmas. Freer Auto Body is hosting its fifth annual "Cookies and Cocoa for Community Christmas" event Dec. 6 from 5-8 p.m. at their location in Godfrey, IL. ChillOut Frozen Creations in Alton is having their first "ChillOut for Christmas" event Dec. 11 from 5-8 p.m. Both events include special door prizes, and ChillOut's event will offer discounts to those that bring in donations.

Community Christmas is also accepting cash donations. Monetary donations should be sent to United Way at 263 South Sixth Street, Wood River, IL 62095 and marked as Attn: Community Christmas. Monetary donations will go towards buying items on the donation list that were not received in large quantities or for certain age groups. "Last year, we were short on items for teenagers, so we used the monetary donations to purchase those items and any other items that we were short on," said Dawna Gilbreath, Community Christmas coordinator.

Community Christmas brought in more than 50 volunteers, 100 boxes, and received roughly 20,000 items donated for the 2011 event. Gilbreath is confident that the donations and participation will exceed last year's numbers. "This is a community that is filled with people who genuinely care about the needs of others," she said.

Volunteer opportunities are also available and include picking up donation-filled boxes once Community Christmas comes to a close, dropping them off at the sorting location, and then sorting and loading the thousands of items donated for pick-up by the agencies.

For those interested in donating items, volunteering or for more information, call United Way's Southwest Illinois Division at 618-251-0072. Those who wish to be involved can also sign up on United Way's volunteer website at www.unitedwaystlcares.org by signing up for a free account and selecting the Community Christmas option.

Donations can also be dropped off during regular business hours at the Southwest Illinois Division of United Way at 263 South Sixth Street, Wood River, IL.

About United Way of Greater St. Louis:

United Way supports more than 170 health and human service agencies located throughout a 16-county area in Missouri and Illinois. One in three people in our community receive services that strengthen families, help the elderly, keep children healthy and safe, and build stronger neighborhoods. For more information, contact 314-421-0700 or visit www.stl.unitedway.org