

Riverbend area showcases generosity once again in annual Community Christmas donation drive

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WOOD RIVER, IL (December 18, 2012) - The annual Community Christmas donation drive for the Riverbend community once again brought in thousands of items for those in need during the holiday season. The drive wrapped up on Thursday, December 13, when more than 160 boxes were picked up from local businesses, dropped off at a central location, and then were sorted for distribution to the 14 receiving agencies.

This year, Community Christmas brought in over 20,000 items, including non-perishable food, clothes, winter weather necessities like gloves, hats and scarves, blankets, baby care items, hygiene items, and new toys.

On Thursday, the total item count was 17,168 individual items. Several last minute cash donations and item drop-offs from businesses and individuals came through late Thursday and all day Friday. These monetary and item donations will put the total count at over 20,000 items by early next week. "We have had some very generous last minute cash donations, which will be enough to buy about 3,000 additional items and also allow us to purchase some gift cards to Schnucks and Dollar General," said Community Christmas Coordinator Dawna Gilbreath.

The breakdown of items donated as of Thursday, December 13, for different categories include: Toys - 4,121, Hygiene Items - 2,058, Winter Weather Essentials - 2,074, Coats - 831, Baby Items - 220, Clothes - 1,258, Adults - 217, and Food - 6,389. The additional 3,000 items to be purchased this weekend with cash donations will put the total item count over 20,000 items, which is right on par with last year's contribution total.

During the rough economic times, the fact that this community was able to bring in roughly the same amount of items for Community Christmas as last year speaks volumes about the generosity of area residents. The large amount of items and monetary donations received equate to a better Christmas and holiday season for those in need in the Riverbend area.

The 14 agencies that picked up their items on Friday, December 14, included: Boys and Girls Club of Alton, Catholic Charities of Madison County, Catholic Children's Home, Children's Home and Aid Society, Christian Social Services, Concerned Citizens, Crisis Food Center, Lutheran Child and Family Services, Oasis Women's Center, Operation Blessing, Riverbend Community Food Pantry, Riverbend Head Start and Family Services, Salvation Army, and WellSpring Resources.

Dozens of volunteers participated on Thursday and Friday to help pick up the boxes from businesses, unload the countless truck-full loads of donations, and sort and count the items for distribution to the agencies. Students from Alton and Marquette High Schools were a major part of the volunteer effort all day Thursday sorting through the more than 20,000 items.

The Southwest Illinois Division of United Way of Greater St. Louis would like to thank everyone who participated for their generous contributions to help this community have a brighter holiday season.

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