

Alton Salvation Army Corp: \$27,000 to go for final push

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ALTON - With just three days to go in the 2017 Red Kettle Campaign and about \$27,000 needed to allow the Corps to Light the Star atop their Tree of Lights Tree, the Alton Corps is making a final push and appeal to the generosity of the residents of the Riverbend communities served by them.

Alton Corps Officers, Lt. Stephen and Lily Reinier said: “There has been such a wonderful outpouring of support for the Alton Corps and its work to date, we are just hopeful and prayerful that there might be one or two larger donors out there who want to insure that this year’s campaign has a ‘Star Lighting Finale’.”

Lieutenant Stephen continued, “Two Gold Coins being found in our first year is quite remarkable, but I know that it is really important to Greg that we are able to Light Our Star.”

Tree of Light’s Chairs, Mark and Mary Cousley have been so impressed by the work being done by all of the volunteers. The Cousley’s shared, “While in other communities the Salvation Army pays some of their bell ringers, the Alton Corps Team is all volunteer.” They continued, “Whether it has been cold and rainy or unseasonably warm, our amazing team has been at their posts ringing their bells and raising the funds so necessary for the yearlong ministries and work of the Alton Corps.” Mary added, “Mark and I just can’t thank each of them enough!” Mark shared her sentiment, but did add, “These last three days (until Saturday, December 23 at 8:00 p.m.) we need everyone to just do a little bit more to insure that all of the time slots are filled and we are giving everyone in the Riverbend a chance to play a role in lighting our star.”

Alton Corps Kettle Coordinator, Greg Gelzinnis, has been down this road before, now leading his third Red Kettle Campaign. He said, “I serve a great big God who I have personally seen do God-sized miracles again and again...lighting our star is absolutely possible.” Gelzinnis shared, “Every day as I walk through our building and see the faces of our clients in search of hope, as I see the presents being provided and packaged with love by donors, staff and volunteers insuring Christmas is a little merrier because of a generous community who believes in our work, as I share words of gratitude with High School students who have manned over 125 bell ringing shifts, and express humble appreciation to Dane Rockafellow, a friend of 25 years, who himself will ring over 35 shifts...lighting our star is a tribute to them.”

The Red Kettle has been used for holiday donations since December 1891, when Capt. Joseph McFee of The Salvation Army in San Francisco placed a brass urn on the Oakland ferry landing to raise money to pay for a Christmas dinner for 1,000 poor people, according to the organization’s website (<http://salvationarmynorth.org/2014/12/history-of-salvation-army-red-kettle/>). McFee raised enough to pay for the dinner and a tradition was born. The Alton Corps has been serving the Riverbend area for 129 years and this year will provide Christmas assistance (toys and food) to over 121 families representing over 400 children. If you would like to make an end of year tax donation to the Red Kettle Campaign, or volunteer for one of the remaining 2-hour Red Kettle shifts, you may contact Gelzinnis at (618) 465-7764.

