

# Salvation Army: "Just shy of our goal, but there's still time."

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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ALTON - The bells have stopped ringing, but that does not mean it is too late to donate to the Alton Corps of the Salvation Army.

In fact, the campaign spans the entire month of January, but Kettle Coordinator Greg Gelzinnis said the Alton Corps of the Salvation Army has an internal deadline of Thursday at 4 p.m., when the star atop its tree of lights is lit (assuming it reaches its goal of \$90,000). As of now, Gelzinnis said they are within a few thousand dollars of that

goal, citing a strong closing weekend last Friday and Saturday. He wanted to remind people who may have wanted to donate there is still time to do so, despite the absence of bell-ringers and kettles outside retail stores.

"We're still a little short, but we are easily within view of that \$90,000 goal," he said Tuesday morning. "The next couple days will be paramount to us reaching that goal. If folks still want to make contributions, they can call me and I can talk them through what that may look like."

Gelzinnis said this year's drive had "a few hurdles to overcome," such as a new bell-ringer registration form, and new groups of volunteers. He said he was thankful for everyone's patience, adding local high schools went above and beyond for the cause. As many as 125 shifts were covered by students from Civic Memorial, Alton, East Alton Wood River and Roxana High Schools.

"We also had a very dedicated bell-ringer for over 20 years in Dane Rockafellow," Gelzinnis said. "He covered more than 70 hours himself."

The Alton Corps of the Salvation Army is one of the few corps across the country not paying its bell-ringers. While the corps formerly paid its bell-ringers, it has since decided to convert to an all-volunteer system. Despite not having every possible shift covered at every participating location, Gelzinnis said the corps experienced "some very strong weekends."

"We found ourselves going into the last weekend of Friday and Saturday needing to raise about \$25,000," he said. "And I am happy to say we had a very strong weekend."

Going into the Christmas weekend, Gelzinnis said the count was hovering around \$65,000 - \$15,000 short of its ultimate goal. At the conclusion of Friday, Gelzinnis said that number had reached \$71,000. Going into Saturday, he said the kettles had reached around \$76,000.

The final number will not be available until Thursday at 4 p.m. when the star either will or will not be lit atop the tree of lights. Gelzinnis said anyone who would like to still donate can by contacting him at (618) 550-9291.