



Grandpa Gang donates to community: Over 60 organizations receive donations from Christmas Wonderland

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ALTON - Visitors poured into Christmas Wonderland in near record numbers in 2017 and that success means financial gifts to area organizations have increased.

Over \$45,000 in donations has been distributed to more than 60 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, and includes visits with Santa Claus in the Enchanted Forest.

“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 Mid America Credit Union
- 1st Presbyterian Church
- 5A's Animal Shelter
- AHS Orchestra
- Alton Amphitheater Commission
- Alton Boys & Girls Club
- Alton Education Foundation
- Alton Fireworks Committee
- Alton Godfrey Rotary Club
- Alton High School Class of '64

- Alton Juneteenth Committee
- Alton Optimist Club
- Pride, Inc./Gordon Moore Project
- Alton Park & Recreation
- Alton School District
- Backstoppers-Blake Snyder Memorial
- Behavior Alternatives
- Bethalto Boys & Girls Club
- Beverly Farms Foundation
- Boots on the Green
- Boy Scout Troop #101
- Bright Hope Chapter E.S.
- Camp Warren Levis – Boy Scouts
- Crisis Food Center
- Cub Scout Pack 3001
- Dunbar Lodge 97
- East Alton American Legion Scholarship Fund
- East Alton Middle School Student Council
- East Alton Rotary
- East End Improvement
- Friends of Haskell
- Girl Scout Troop #71
- Gordon Moore Park Smith Fund
- Grafton United Methodist Church
- Home Depot
- Hope Community Center
- Hope Rescue
- Impact
- Ladies of Hibernian
- Land of Lincoln Honor Flights
- Montessori
- Mississippi Valley Christian 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 Community Food Pantry
- Riverbend Head Start

- Rotary of the Riverbend
- Salvation Army
- Senior Services Plus
- Scheffel Boyle
- St. Vincent De Paul Society
- Toddletowne
- TreeHouse Wildlife 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 Toddletown. Third Place was awarded to Montessori School and East Alton Middle School Student Council .

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.

Volunteers are always needed to help with Christmas Wonderland projects. Volunteer informational meetings are held in August. The transformation of Rock Spring Park begins in September. Volunteers typically work three to five days a week from 8 a.m. to noon helping with tasks like setting up wooden displays and hanging lights throughout the park. To volunteer, contact Al Cowgill at 618-401-2939.