

# Massive success: Hundreds visit Riverbender Community Holiday Open House

by Steven Spencer, Staff Writer  
November 17 2018 6:21 AM





## **SEE PHOTO GALLERY:**

ALTON - Hundreds of people pushed through the doors like Black Friday shoppers to attend the Riverbender.com Community Center Holiday Open House Friday night. Following the annual lighting of the Community Christmas Tree in Downtown Alton, the RBCC opened its doors to welcome families who either walked or trollied to the festively decorated Center to enjoy the free event.

“It think this is a great success,” said Alton resident Julia Johnson, who attended the event with her 6-year-old son Sterling and his grandmother, GaGa. “I love the diversity of the people and the variety of ages.”

“I love that the RBCC Holiday Open House has become a tradition for so many families in the Alton/Godfrey area and that as chairman, I get to have an impact on how these families start off their holiday season,” said RBCC board member Vicki Grover. “Being part of a family of volunteers at the Center, it is our mission to help as many teens as we can in this area have a safe place to gather. The Open House lets us show off what we do, as well as thank those who help us achieve our mission by sharing our facility with the community.”

The event was manned by numerous adult and student volunteers of the Center and allowed attendees to experience the many regular features the Center provides, as well as special holiday-related games and activities designed just for the Open House.

“This is one of our largest events,” said RBCC Executive Director Jeff Allsman. “It’s an opportunity for the Center to showcase its offerings while spreading the Christmas Spirit. We had a number of games and activities for youth of all ages and some great prizes. There were so many smiles. It was a great way to start the holiday season!”

Hit-N-Run owner Dwight Fowler, a great supporter of the RBCC, donated more than \$700 in prizes for the event. Fowler’s gift helped make sure the children left the event with happy spirits.

“Dwight is a very generous man,” Allsman said. “It seems he’s always looking for ways to contribute to the happiness of children. He has a history of generosity towards the RBCC mission.”

Fowler had an appropriate quote and summary of how important the Riverbender Community Center and this event is for the community: “Kids are our future. We are glad to support this event and the Riverbender Community Center with the donation.”

Marquette Catholic High School contributed to the basket raffle and the event also featured a bake sale, pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus, door prizes and live music. But mostly, the children just enjoyed the games and activities.

“Seven-year-old Gabby Fuller of Jerseyville, who attended the event with her mother, said her favorite event was the rock climbing wall. “I asked Santa for a pink hover board,” she said. “I’ve been that good.”

Nine-year-old Presley Brewer of Bethalto and her 9-year-old friend Ryleigh Parish of Godfrey both won door prizes. Each have younger brothers and with their moms, attended the event as a group.

“It’s been our tradition,” said Presley’s mom Eron Brewer of attending the Open House. “I think we’ve probably been to every one of them.”

The line to enter the building was steady for nearly an hour.

“Ja’marie Rogers of Godfrey said he enjoyed playing all the games and loved the prizes. “And I asked Santa for a PS4,” he said.

Other guests said they enjoyed the Dragonfly Room for preschoolers and the Art Room for crafts, as the entire Center was open to the public.

“I’ll be back again next year!” Presley Brewer said.





[Jeff Allsman also contributed to this story.](#)