

Calling All 'Grandpas' For Christmas Wonderland

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ALTON - The holiday transformation of Rock Spring Park in Alton will begin in early September, and new Christmas Wonderland volunteers are needed to help put together displays to ensure the holidays sparkle in 2019.

An informational meeting for volunteers is planned for 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 14 at Meunstermann Pavilion in Gordon Moore Park. The Grandpa Gang, which coordinates the annual Christmas event, is looking for volunteers to help with tasks like setting up wooden displays and hanging lights throughout the park. Volunteers are able to work any time between 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday and work continues through the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Volunteers are not required to work each day of set up. Set up in the park is expected to begin Monday, Sept. 9 at 8 a.m. Local restaurants band together to provide lunch later in the volunteer season.

If interested in volunteering but unable to attend the Aug. 14 meeting, volunteers should contact Al Cowgill at 618-401-2939 or Tom Pahr at 618-250-0670.

“Great friendships have developed through the years in this organization,” Al Cowgill, head Grandpa, notes. “Volunteers also get a good feeling of civic pride and accomplishment.”

Rock Spring Park has been decorated for the Christmas season for over 25 years with Christmas Wonderland. This year’s holiday light display will begin Friday, Nov. 29 and run through Sunday, Dec. 29. Christmas Wonderland comes to life from 6 to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

The Grandpa Gang, a group of retirees and volunteers, organizes and designs a Christmas spectacular of cascading lights, tunnels and displays for visitors and locals to enjoy each year. Each evening, the park sparkles against the night sky with three million glistening lights, all hung by volunteers and the “gang.” Visitors and families can turn off their headlights and let the holiday displays carry them through the magical scene. Even a few of Alton’s historical figures visit, including displays of Robert Wadlow, the World’s Tallest Man, placing the star on the Christmas tree and the legendary Piasa Bird carrying a bag of gifts for the kids.

Each year, Christmas Wonderland warms the hearts and helps families and friends capture the holiday spirit. All of the proceeds from the attraction’s seasonal revenue is returned to the community in the form of donations to local charities.