

# **It's Time To Give Back To A Retired Alton Police Officer and His Wife After Devastating Marietta Place Fire**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - Here it is eight days before Christmas and one of Alton's finest and most giving families lost their home in a devastating fire this week in the 100 block of Marietta Place in Alton.

Jim “Wally” Wetzstein and Karen Wetzstein lost their home in a destructive blaze at 4:28 a.m. Wednesday. Thankfully, the couple was able to escape and get out safely.

If there was one thing the region could do this year at Christmas, it would be to rally financially around this family who lost a lot of what they had in this terrible blaze.

Andrea Abbott, a friend, quickly found a way to help and has organized a GoFundMe to assist the couple with their needs during the holiday season. She encourages the public to give generously to this most-giving, community-oriented Alton couple.

"The fire ruined all of the Christmas gifts that Karen had just wrapped and put under the tree," Abbott said. "They are fortunate to have insurance that will put them in a hotel. But at the moment, they have lost everything. Any amount would be so greatly appreciated to the GoFundMe page organized for them."

“Wally,” as he was called by his fellow Alton Police officers, served the department for 27 years before he retired in 2014.

Retired Alton Police Chief Jason “Jake” Simmons encouraged anyone who can in the region to give to the GoFundMe to help this giving couple have a good Christmas.

“Wally is well-liked by everyone,” Simmons said. “He was a hard-working, cop’s cop. He would do anything you told him to do and in the best way, he could do it. He was always active in *Shop With A Cop* and with food baskets for those in need. He was all about the community.”

Simmons said Wally still works part-time as a police officer in Grafton and for a security firm in St. Louis.

“He has done a lot for the families in Alton,” Simmons said. “He helped me move. He was the kind of guy who would call and be there at 7 in the morning to help with his truck; you didn't have to call him to ask for his help. He was all about the police and is a wonderful guy. My wife and I were talking this morning and we are going to send a check to help out. He has done so much for me. He's always been there for all of us.”

The present Alton Police Chief Marcos Pulido emulated what retired Chief Simmons had to say: "Wally continues to live in the community that he served for 27 years. He is still active in the community and has been instrumental in helping our community for years.

"He has always been there for others when they have been in need."

Abbott said the following on the GoFundMe: “The morning of December 16, 2020, at 4 a.m., Wally and Karen woke up to their home on fire. Karen and Wally would give the shirt off their back to anyone in need.

[Riverbender.com](#) reporter/photographer Chris Rhodes had perhaps the best story to show Wetzstein’s kindness to others.

“Wally helped out a lot with the Alton Police Department’s Explorer Post,” Rhodes said. “I got really sick in Colorado on an Explorer trip because of the elevation and he took me to the hospital. He could have gone back with the other kids, but he stayed there with me until my mom flew from St. Louis to pick me up. That is how nice a guy he is. He could have just dropped me off at the hospital and left, but he stayed with me the whole time. That meant so much to me.”

**To give to the Wetzstein family, to help them and their relatives have a Merry Christmas, click below:**

[https://www.gofundme.com/f/fundraiser-for-the-wetzstein-family?  
utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR1Et7uEsDXAyslBG1AmRQUo6aRlQTVj-  
hxQL2fUHDjud-bP8E2K-tpMtvU](https://www.gofundme.com/f/fundraiser-for-the-wetzstein-family?utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR1Et7uEsDXAyslBG1AmRQUo6aRlQTVj-hxQL2fUHDjud-bP8E2K-tpMtvU)



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[Chris Rhodes also contributed to this story.](#)