

# Nearly \$65,000 Christmas Wonderland Community Donations Announced

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**ALTON** - Visitors flocked to Christmas Wonderland in Alton in record numbers during the 2020 holiday season and that success means the volunteer organization was able to increase its donations to local organizations.

Nearly \$65,000 in donations has been distributed to 53 civic organizations courtesy of the Grandpa Gang and Christmas Wonderland, a direct result of strong holiday seasonal visitors to the landmark Alton attraction.

“We are so pleased with the financial support we received considering the unusual year we had with the pandemic,” Dick Alford, head grandpa of the Grandpa Gang said. “We had a lot of folks looking for any reason to get out of the house and they came to Christmas Wonderland. We had many people coming to see us for the first time.”

Christmas Wonderland, spearheaded by the volunteer Grandpa Gang, features more than 4 million lights strung throughout Rock Spring Park. This year due to the pandemic the Enchanted Forest and visits with Santa Claus were cancelled.

“The financial support we received in 2020 means we can help others in our surrounding communities and that is the true meaning of the holiday season,” Alford said.

Area organizations receiving financial donations from Christmas Wonderland include:

1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church 4<sup>th</sup> & Alby  
5A's Animal Shelter  
Alton Amphitheater Commission  
Alton Boys & Girls Club

Alton Fireworks Committee

Alton Godfrey Kiwanis

Alton Godfrey Rotary Club

Alton High School Class of '64

Alton Juneteenth Committee

Alton Optimist Club

AMH White Cross

Pride, Inc./Gordon Moore Project

Backstoppers-Captain Jacob Ringering & Luke Warner

Behavior Alternatives

Bethalto Boys & Girls Club

Beverly Farms Foundation

Boy Scout Troop #101

Bright Hope Chapter E.S.

Crisis Food Center

Cub Scout Pack 3001

Dunbar Lodge 97

East Alton American Legion Scholarship Fund

East Alton Rotary

East End Improvement

GRWC Wood river Women's Club

Gordon Moore Park Smith Fund

Got Faith

Grafton United Methodist Church

Hope Community Center

Hope Rescue

Impact

Land of Lincoln Honor Flights

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

Salvation Army

Senior Services Plus

Scheffel Boyle

St. Peter Lutheran Church

St. Vincent De Paul Society

TreeHouse Wildlife center

Wreaths Across America

YWCA

Plans for the 2021 Christmas Wonderland season include the return of the Enchanted Forest and visits with Santa Claus, Alford noted.

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.

Christmas Wonderland began as a grass roots movement when volunteers began decorating the entrance to Rock Spring Park for the holiday season in 1997. Those efforts evolved into Christmas Wonderland in 2003.

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 Dick Alford at 618-781-2482.