

Freer girls inspire others with Cookies and Cocoa event

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Taylor and Lilly Freer will host their annual Cookies and Cocoa event on Thursday night for Community Christmas. Residents are encouraged to participate in the event.

Taylor Freer, 11, and Lilly Freer, 8, have developed a passion for helping the less fortunate each year for Christmas.

On Thursday night, the Freer sisters will host the annual Cookies and Cocoa for Community Christmas from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at Freer Auto Body in Godfrey, located at 4512 Alby in Alton.

Community Christmas is a United Way-sponsored drive. The Cookies and Cocoa event collects funds, toys and coats for the Christmas cause. Those who attend are asked to bring one of those items. Last year, the girls and their family raised \$18,000 from this event and a similar one they host in the summer called Christmas in July.

Taylor and Lilly said they both appreciate being able to give back to the River Bend and help needy children.

“We do this in memory of my uncle David Freer,” Taylor Freer said. “I appreciate that my grandma (Margaret) and grandpa (Mike) are teaching me you can give back to the community. Also, it is really fun to hand cocoa out to people. I really miss my uncle David and he does inspire me.”

Taylor said she encouraged people to come out to their event for Community Christmas and help raise more funds and gifts than they did last year.

“I look forward to it each year,” she said.

Lilly echoed what Taylor said: “I look forward to helping those who need it,” she said. “I also like handing out cookies and cocoa to people who come.”

On Christmas Day, Lilly said each year she and her sister reflect for a moment before they open their own toys and gifts. The girls said they think about what they have done to help other children in the area.

“I feel like we help a lot of other kids and I do think about it that day,” she said.

Taylor is in fifth grade at Evangelical School in Godfrey; Lilly is in second grade.

Margaret Freer, also one of the owners of Freer Auto Body, said she couldn't be more proud of her two granddaughters and this annual effort to help other area children. She also said Community Christmas was the favorite charity for her late son, David.

“We started these efforts in memory of my son, who died seven years ago in September,” Margaret Freer said.

“I am so proud of Taylor and Lilly,” Margaret said. “They are precious little girls. They are my ray of sunshine and make me smile every time I see them. In the darkest of hours after my son's death, they are what pulled us through. They are children who have learned what it is to give to someone who needs help. I think they will always carry on the family tradition of giving and caring that has been instilled in them since they were little.”

There will be several excellent door prizes and drawings at the Cookies and Cocoa night and residents are encouraged to come out.

“We look forward to seeing a lot of people there each year,” Lilly Freer said.