

Community members, police, fire departments share time helping kids find shoes

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 22 2014 6:00 PM



Christmas is the favorite time of the year for Patrick “Doc” Halliday, owner of Atlantis Pool in Alton.

About 12 years ago, Halliday and his partner Jon Wooden became involved with the All God's Children Shall Have Shoes program in Alton, then headed by Ford Green. After a few years of being involved the two men were hooked and a few years back took over for Green.

"We love it," Halliday said. "This means everything to us. The needs are so great. Once a year we have a big fund-raiser and we raised over \$12,000 last year."

About 25 schools participated in the shoe giveaway last week at Famous Footwear. Halliday was extremely proud to have such a variety of participants from firemen, policemen, Freer Auto Body volunteers, The Salvation Army, Illinois American Water and many more helping in the shoe giveaway.

Matt Stimac, principal at Eastwood Elementary in East Alton, has been sending kids through the program for several years.

"It is tremendous to see how the community comes together to help people this time of year," he said.

Margaret Freer and son, Tim, owners of Freer Auto Body, are actively involved in the program both with contributions and their time.

"It is very heartwarming and I love doing it," Margaret said.

Tim Freer said just seeing the smile on the kids' faces makes it for him. "We try to give back best we can," he said of his business, which contributes to many charities throughout the area, especially Community Christmas.

Salvation Army's Lt. Bryan Ellison said it is wonderful to see the fire department, police officers, the water company and so many other people volunteering.

"It's not just hunger we need to be concerned about," he said. "It's also clothes and shoes and everything else."

Alton Police Chief Jake Simmons said he was taken by seeing members of his police department and fire department and others in the community work together with the children to make the program a success. He had a smile on his face the entire time he was there and said he loved his time spent helping the children find the right shoes.

Halliday had an appropriate way to sum up this past week of the shoe distribution: “This is the best time of year for us and it is a fun time for the kids,” he said. “This is our Christmas,” he said.

