

# United Way's Community Christmas Raises Thousands Of Dollars To Help People During The Holidays

by Erin Smith

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EAST ALTON - United Way's annual Community Christmas program raised more than \$56,000 to purchase needed items for people throughout the Riverbend area.

The largest funder for Community Christmas is Freer Auto Body's annual "Christmas in July". In addition, over 30 boxes of donations were collected from around the community and distributed to United Way partner agencies with donations that included new toys, non-perishable food, baby and personal care items, and winter essentials like coats, hats, gloves, and scarves.

"We are always surprised by how much support Community Christmas is able to garner from the Riverbend Community, but we are so fortunate to live in a community that cares about uplifting their neighbors," said Maura Wuellner, director of the Southwest Illinois Division of United Way. "We are thankful for everyone who contributed by donating or volunteering. Support for Community Christmas from so many generous people will help someone receive a special gift or an essential need that will brighten their holiday season."

Community Christmas partners with 17 agencies that distribute and provide the items to their clients: 100 Black Men – Alton Branch; Beverly Farms; Boys and Girls Club of Alton; Caritas Family Solutions; Catholic Children's Home; Centerstone; Children's Home & Aid; Crisis Food Center; Illinois Center for Autism; Oasis Women's Center; Operation Blessing; Riverbend Family Ministries; Riverbend Head Start Family Services; Salvation Army; Madison County Urban League; Village of Royal Lakes; YMCA.

The Alton School District also held a food drive through the program and collected 12 boxes of canned goods and other non-perishable items for the Crisis Food Pantry. Additionally, Freer Auto Body hosted a Cookies and Coco event that helped raise even more support for the program, including the collection of dozens of pairs of gloves and hats to be given out this winter.

### **About United Way of Greater St. Louis**

United Way of Greater St. Louis mobilizes the community with one goal in mind — helping people live their best possible lives. Located throughout 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois, United Way helps one in three people in the region build a foundation for a good quality of life through basic needs, education, financial stability, health and strong communities. For more information, contact 314-421-0700 or visit [www.HelpingPeople.org](http://www.HelpingPeople.org).

# Thanks

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