



Community Christmas Is Special Again In 2022, Much Because Of The Freer Family Effort

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The charity work of the Freer family again made Christmas Day 2022 a blessing for those who would not have otherwise had new toys, coats, hats, gloves, personal care items, new socks, non-perishable food, and blankets under their trees on December 25 morning.

The Freer legacy with Community Christmas dates back to early work by the late David Freer and his brother, Tim. David Freer started Freer Auto Body in 1991 after he

graduated from Ranken Technical College. The boys' mother, Margaret Freer, their father, Mike, and Tim's wife, Carrie, have all been involved in Community Christmas over the years along with Tim and Carrie's daughters, Lily and Taylor. Taylor has gone off to college, but over the summer she was part of an effort that raised a record \$56,000-plus for the 2022 Community Christmas campaign.

Margaret said Community Christmas was always David's favorite charity and that has motivated them to keep his legacy alive year after year and make sure children and families of the Riverbend area wake up on Christmas morning with smiling, happy faces.

"David would be very proud of what we have done with Community Christmas," Margaret said. "I can't imagine where Community Christmas would be if we hadn't done what we have done all these years."

The Christmas In July fundraising event coordinated by Taylor and Lily was the most successful ever and made sure the campaign was a success even without the boxes collection that went on in November and December. The Freer family also had their Cookies and Cocoa in December and collected \$1,900 in cash and a box truck full of toys, coats, etc., Margaret said.

"There were some happy kiddos this year," Margaret said. "The support the community gives us with Christmas in July and Cookies and Cocoa is just mind-boggling; we are so grateful. When everyone enjoys Christmas Day with their families, whether you helped sell raffle tickets, donated a raffle item, bought a ticket came to either event, just know you have made a difference in the life of a child."

Margaret said her son, David, even shopped for Community Christmas presents himself while he was alive, and he was probably the happiest person of all on Christmas Day when he woke up and knew children of the Riverbend would have a precious morning.

"We always try to give back to the community," Margaret said. "The community has been very good to us and we always try to remember."

"Christmas and the holiday season is to show love and celebrate with family and the most important thing of course is the birth of Jesus. People get wrapped up sometimes in other stuff and tend to forget that."

Margaret and her husband, Mike, have been married for 53 years. She said she did not come from an affluent family with eight children and everything they received on Christmas was special. Margaret's legendary cheesecake has been sampled by people

from all over the Riverbend at the Christmas In July and Cookies and Cocoa for Community Christmas. She says she still loves to bake and her Christmas cookies are also heralded around the region.

What Margaret now may be most proud of is her two granddaughters - Taylor and Lily - for the lessons they have learned over the years about giving to others.

"Taylor and Lily are both kind and giving girls," Margaret said.