

Calling All 'Grandpas For Christmas Wonderland

by Stephanie Tate
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ALTON - The holiday transformation of Rock Springs Park in Alton will begin in early September, and new Christmas Wonderland volunteers are always needed to help put together displays to ensure the holidays sparkle in 2023.

An informational meeting for volunteers is planned for 11 a.m., Tuesday, Aug. 8 at Meunstermann Pavilion in Gordon Moore Park, Alton. The Grandpa Gang, which coordinates the annual Christmas event, is looking for volunteers to help with tasks like setting up wooden displays and hanging lights throughout the park. Volunteers are able to work any time between 8 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday and work continues through the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Volunteers are not required to work each day of set up. Set up in the park is expected to begin Monday, Sept. 11 at 8 a.m.

If interested in volunteering but unable to attend the Aug. 8 meeting, volunteers should contact Dick Alford at 618-781-2482 or Dave Davis at 618-419-1969.

“We always look forward to meeting new volunteers and working together to make Christmas Wonderland shine,” Dick Alford, head Grandpa, notes. “This is a wonderful opportunity to do something great for the community and all the thousands of people who look forward to the light show each year.”

Rock Springs Park has been decorated for the Christmas season for over 25 years with Christmas Wonderland. This year’s holiday light display will begin Friday, Nov. 24 and run through Wednesday, Dec. 27. Christmas Wonderland comes to life from 6 to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

The Grandpa Gang, a group of retirees and volunteers, organizes and designs a Christmas spectacular of cascading lights, tunnels and displays for visitors and locals to enjoy each year. Each evening, the park sparkles against the night sky with three million glistening lights, all hung by volunteers and the “gang.” Visitors and families can turn off their headlights and let the holiday displays carry them through the magical scene. Even a few of Alton’s historical figures visit, including displays of Robert Wadlow, the World’s Tallest Man, placing the star on the Christmas tree and the legendary Piasa Bird carrying a bag of gifts for the kids.

Santa will once again be available for photos with children or the entire family. If you would like a photo to commemorate your visit to Christmas Wonderland please bring your own camera or cell phone. The Enchanted Forest is also returning this year where visitors can vote for their favorite decorated tree.

Each year, Christmas Wonderland warms the hearts and helps families and friends capture the holiday spirit. Proceeds from the attraction’s seasonal revenue is returned to the community in the form of donations to local charities.