



# Create a Brighter Holiday Season Through United Way's Community Christmas

by Katie Felts

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EAST ALTON — When members of the local community lend a helping hand to a neighbor in need during the holiday season, they are bringing hope, joy and inspiration to the community. That is what Community Christmas is all about!

United Way's annual Community Christmas program collects money, necessary household items, and gifts for children through early December for local people in need during the holiday season. It kicked off this month with more than 100 boxes at participating businesses, churches, schools and organizations throughout the Greater Alton area. A list of participating locations hosting a box is available at [HelpingPeople.org/CommunityChristmas](http://HelpingPeople.org/CommunityChristmas).

"Community Christmas is one of the pillars of our community outreach efforts during the holidays and the support we've been able to garner from our local neighbors over the course of the past 15 years has been fantastic," said Karen Lintz, Director, Illinois Region of United Way of Greater St. Louis. "Our community's willingness to unite with us will help us bring hope and joy to local children and families who may be struggling during the holidays."

This year, the top needs in the community are blankets, household and personal care items, new coats and other clothing items. Additional items needed by local agencies include non-perishable food, new toys for kids of all ages, baby formula and diapers, and new socks, hats, gloves and scarves.

All of the items collected will be distributed to the following agencies to help people in the community during the holiday season and beyond:

- 100 Black Men – Alton Branch
- Beverly Farms
- Boys and Girls Club of Alton
- Brightpoint
- Caritas family Solutions
- Catholic Children's Home
- Centerstone
- Crisis Food Center
- Illinois Center for Autism
- Madison County Urban League
- Oasis Women's Center
- Operation Blessing
- Riverbend Family Ministries
- Riverbend Head Start & Family Services
- Salvation Army
- Village of Royal Lakes
- YMCA of Southwestern Illinois

In addition, monetary donations are also accepted and will be used to purchase items in short supply or not collected. Donations can be made online at [HelpingPeople.org/CommunityChristmas](https://HelpingPeople.org/CommunityChristmas) or mailed to United Way at 707 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 270, East Alton, IL 62024, marked Attn: Community Christmas.

There are still donation boxes available for businesses and organizations to host. Those interested in requesting a box can call 618-258-9800.