

# 'Tis The Season To Be Jolly:' Alton Tree-Lighting Ceremony Once Again Brings In Start Of Christmas Season

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
November 18 2023 6:55 AM

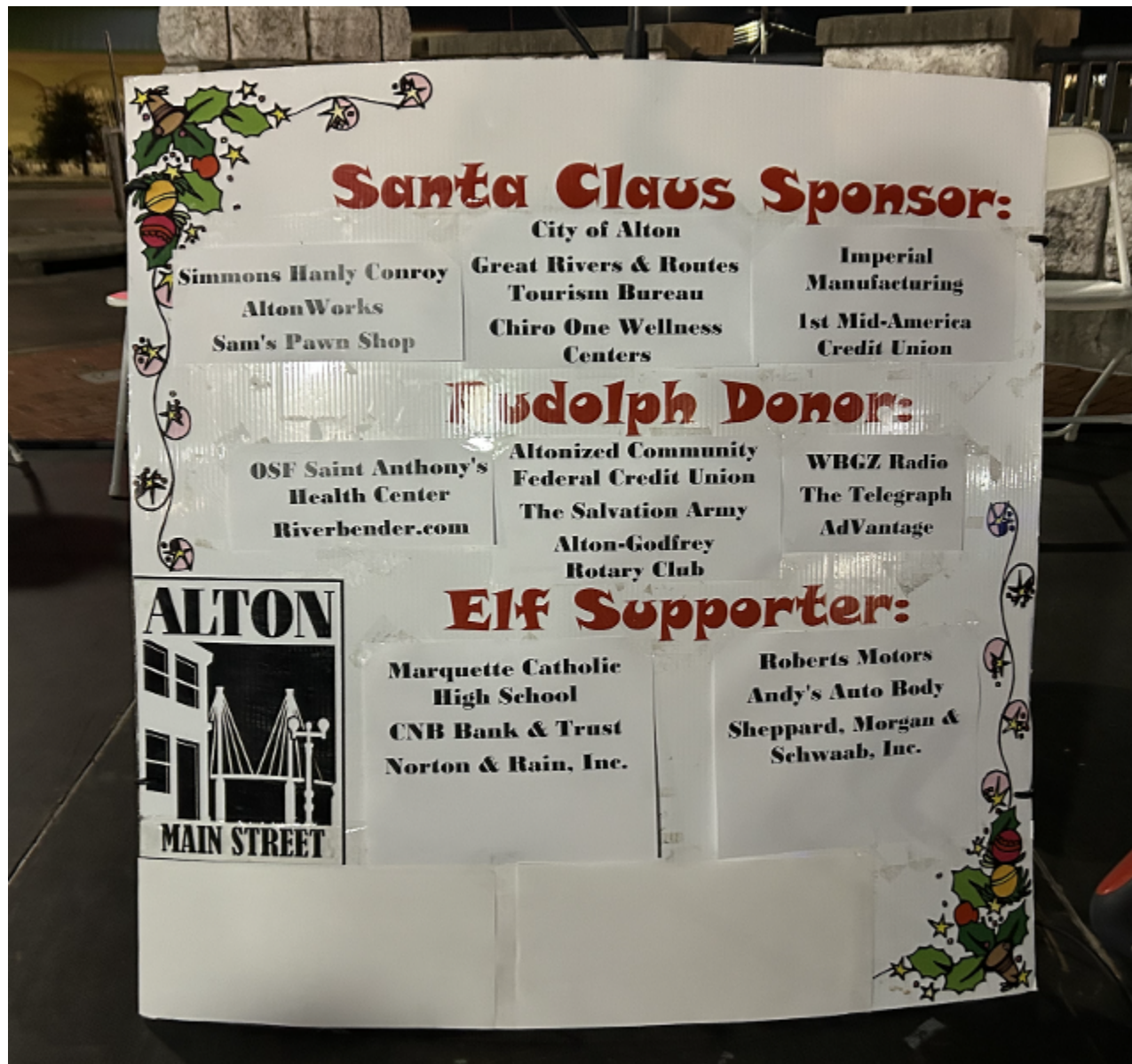






ALTON - The Annual 2023 Alton Tree Lighting Ceremony was again one to remember with mild weather and a packed contingency gathered to kick off the Christmas season in Downtown Alton on Friday night, Nov. 17, 2023, at Lincoln Douglas Square.

The Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club and Alton Main Street partner to put on the tree lighting event on each year. The Salvation Army also kicked off its Annual Bell-Ringing Campaign in Alton on this special night. There are also several sponsors of the event, shown here in a photo.



[Riverbender.com](http://Riverbender.com) and Big Z Media partnered to broadcast the Tree-Lighting Ceremony live on Our Daily Show! with CJ Nasello and Mike Roberts, a former KSDK meteorologist, as the night's hosts.

Mark Ellerbracht of Big Z Media was the master of ceremonies for the event.

In an interview with CJ Nasello, Roberts said the Alton community is always one that comes together so well and the Tree Lighting Ceremony and The Salvation Army bell-ringing campaign are just examples of that each year.

“Karen and I are so proud to be the chairs of the upcoming bell-ringing campaign,” he said of the Salvation Army effort.

“The bell-ringing campaign is so important for the Salvation Army’s immediate and long-term needs and runs from Nov. 18 to Dec. 24,” Mike Roberts said.

Cassy Grey, speaking for herself and her husband, Sean, said the Salvation Army offers so many programs and hope for families in the region in their time of need. She explained there are a lot of layers to the Pathway For Hope program of the Army. She said there are also over 800 angels on a tree of families who need help this year at Christmas. She hoped that donors would extend assistance to those so they can receive gifts on Christmas Day.











The Tree Lighting event was beautiful once again with Salvation Army and youth carolers providing preliminary entertainment with a percussion group.

Stephanie Schrage, president of Alton Main Street, thanked the various sponsors of the event and stressed the importance of shopping in the Downtown Alton area and at other local shops to support businesses during the holiday season. Sara McGibany, executive director of Alton Main Street, also thanked the event sponsors on Our Daily Show! and echoed the importance of shopping local during the Christmas season. McGibany also said the Tree Lighting is a wonderful community event that everyone looks forward to each year.









Patrick Baxter of Country Bible Church provided the blessing and Jim Claywell, president of the Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club, talked about how much it meant to its members to have the tree in Lincoln-Douglas Square.

Claywell said this marked the 29th year of the Alton-Godfrey Rotary Club tree in Lincoln-Douglas Square for people to see.

He also explained this is one of the Rotary Club's favorite projects year in and year out.

"It is a great way to kick off the holiday season before Thanksgiving," he said.

Several characters from Captain Red Kettle, Santa Claus and others also made appearances at the Tree Lighting Ceremony.

In the end, Alton Mayor David Goins was in the center of the group and he led the ceremonial countdown to the official turn-on of the Christmas tree lights.

Goins had perhaps the most catchy phrase of the night when he said: "As singer Andy Williams says, 'This is the most wonderful time of the year. Tis the season to be jolly.'"

