



Local Organizations to Support This Giving Tuesday

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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RIVERBEND - As the holiday season approaches, several organizations in the Riverbend region will rely on donations to continue serving the community. On this Giving Tuesday, we've compiled a few organizations that could use your help today and throughout the year.

“Thinking about year-round and not just on Giving Tuesday, different seasons call for different needs. So we get a lot during certain times of year, but that isn't always spread out,” said Ashley Lockwood, an educator for the [Audubon Center at Riverlands](#).

Lockwood explained that the Audubon Center leads conservation efforts for birds on a national scale, including at their base at 301 Riverlands Way in West Alton, Missouri.

They also have several educational programs that they offer for no or low cost to local K-12 students.

Donations to the Audubon Center help fund these programs and keep the costs down. They also allow the Center to pay more employees or hire interns from local high schools.

“Donations small or large go a very long way towards both our conservation efforts and our education programs,” Lockwood added. “People’s money is going directly into those efforts, so they’re helping both their community and birds across the entire globe.”

Ty Bechel, the executive director of [Amare](#), echoed Lockwood’s observation that helping on a local scale can have a big impact. Amare offers [recovery support for individuals and families struggling with substance use disorders](#). Bechel said donations allow them to offer more services and hire additional coaches who specialize in addiction recovery.

“If you want to support a cause that is ravaging our communities, nationally, everywhere — from fentanyl deaths to methamphetamines on the street — we have to be able to meet people where they’re at, to give them the resources to not just survive but to thrive,” Bechel said. “If the person is willing to meet us halfway, we’re willing to meet them halfway, to get them what they need to get them on their feet.”

While local organizations like Amare and [Centerstone](#) offer many resources for people with substance use disorders, Bechel noted that it can be difficult to fundraise because of the stigma surrounding substance use. But he said substance use is still a “problem,” whether people agree with its classification as an illness or not. Ultimately, Amare aims to help people manage addiction and recovery.

“Working with adults that struggle with substance use in the nonprofit sector, it tends to be one of the hardest things to raise funds for just because a lot of the participants that work with us, society doesn’t necessarily see them as victims, if that makes sense. It’s a little bit different than looking at animals like puppy dogs and kittens and children,” Bechel said. “But the people we work with are still human.”

There are several other organizations and outreach efforts in the community that could use support today and every day. [Riverbend Rotary](#) is currently sponsoring [a raffle that will provide car seats and sleep kits for babies and toddlers](#). [Riverbend Head Start & Family Services](#) relies on donations year-round to provide preschool and healthcare services to income-eligible families. [Oasis Women’s Center](#) and the [Violence](#)

[Prevention Center of Southwestern Illinois](#) both offer [resources for survivors of domestic violence](#), an initiative that's especially timely as many people return to abusers during the holiday season.

“Everybody needs a little bit of help,” Bechel said.

Whether you choose to help a local organization or a larger one, Riverbend community members will benefit on Giving Tuesday and throughout the year.