



# Cookies and Cocoa for Community Christmas Raises Money for Families This Season

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Community members gathered at Freer Auto Body to enjoy Cookies and Cocoa for Community Christmas, a United Way initiative that provides toys and essentials for families during the holiday season.

Freer Auto Body is a major contributor to the United Way mission with its annual Christmas in July fundraiser. The Cookies and Cocoa event celebrates the success of the summer fundraiser and raises more money to go toward Community Christmas.



“It’s our mission to make sure that kids have a nice Christmas and families that are experiencing rough times,” explained Margaret Freer, owner of Freer Auto Body. “It’s just very heartwarming to know that we are able to help. God has blessed us very much, so we try to pay it forward.”

Karen Lintz, Director of the Illinois Region for the United Way of Greater St. Louis, explained that there are 116 boxes in businesses throughout the Riverbend area. Community members have been donating toys, clothing, toiletries, personal hygiene items and more over the past month. During the Cookies and Cocoa event, Freer Auto Body was filled with boxes of donations and approximately 30 bicycles that had been donated from the community.

Lintz said United Way works with 18 local agencies that will distribute the items to families. Each agency has reported that they will be able to help 500–700 families with the amount of donations that have been collected so far.

“It’s an exciting time of the year because for 30 years now we’ve put on Community Christmas, and this is made possible through the Freer Auto Body donations,” Lintz added. “Everything that’s happening now is a result of the Christmas in July raffle that they put on, and then all of their outreach to the community as well.”

Freer noted that while the Auto Body shop coordinates these donations, the community’s participation makes Community Christmas possible. Liz Campbell, the chair of Community Christmas, echoed Freer’s sentiment and added that she has been happy to see such a positive response to this year’s fundraiser.

“It feels good,” Campbell said. “I like seeing everybody help out. I can’t wait to just wake up on Christmas Day that other people will get to feel special.”

For more information about Community Christmas, contact Freer Auto Body at (618) 466-6151. Visit the [official United Way of Greater St. Louis website at HelpingPeople.org](#) to donate today.