

Middletown Neighborhood Lights Up the Night with Christmas Eve Luminary

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
December 27 2023 1:09 PM



ALTON - On Christmas Eve, Alton's [Middletown Historic District](#) was once again aglow as part of their annual luminary tradition.

The tradition invites neighbors to put out 5,000 candles along Henry, E. 12th and surrounding streets. While the luminary is limited to Middletown, luminary chair Shannon Sholar said she hopes to bring in more blocks next year to enjoy the tradition.

“It’s a great way to kick off the season,” Sholar said. “It showcases the beautiful historic neighborhood. It is just unbelievably peaceful and calming to drive through and see that glow up and down the streets with all the bags lined up. And it’s a great way for neighbors to come out of their homes when everybody’s stuck inside and mix with their neighbors and just kick off the holiday season.”

The luminary was started 22 years ago by Margaret Hopkins, but the tradition itself has remained largely the same. Sholar explained that every block has a “block captain” who organizes the luminary and makes sure it’s ready to go on Dec. 24. The candles are supplied by the Middletown Neighbors Association, and Duke’s Bakery donates the paper bags.

“I am so lucky and appreciative of all of our block captains, many of which have been participating since the inception,” Sholar added. “Without them, it obviously wouldn’t happen. They’re there. They’re Johnny-on-the-spot. They’re ready to pitch in no matter what the weather, what the conditions, and take care of it.”

The luminary has only been canceled twice due to inclement weather, including last year. Sholar decided they would “lay low” in 2023. But now that they are back on track, she hopes more people will join the luminary next December. She encourages anyone in Middletown who wants to be a part of the luminary to contact [Middletown Neighbors on Facebook](#).

“If someone lives in Middletown and their block is not participating, if they and/or their neighbors would like information or to participate next year, we’d love to have them. The more the merrier,” she said. “It’s a busy time for everybody, so just to have people out there doing that and taking time out of their busy schedules means the world. It’s something everybody is proud of and just a great tradition that Margaret Hopkins started 22 years ago.”