

# Halloween Parade Marshal Bill Keller truly has Alton in his heart

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**ALTON** - If there were ever a man who had Alton's well being in his heart, it would be **Bill Keller**.

Keller, 76, will be the parade grand marshal this year for the **Alton Halloween Parade**, set for 7:30 p.m. Saturday in Downtown Alton.

Keller, a long-time **Alton Housing Authority** employee, and has been associated with the parade since the early 1960s when he joined **East End Improvement Association**. Today the organization is coordinator for the parade. Keller has devoted hours upon hours of time to East End and other organizations over the years.

As he rides through the city as the prestigious grand marshal, Keller will likely have a lot of memories running through his mind and how the Halloween Parade has been built into such a firm-rooted tradition in Alton for families. Starting in the late afternoon on Saturday, families will start occupying their traditional spaces where they stand year after year for the Halloween Parade. Some plan parties and gatherings literally around the parade. The Halloween Parade is simply Alton at its best year in and year out.

Keller will also likely shed a few tears as he waves to the crowd along the route Saturday night. He said he is extremely appreciative of the honor by the East End Improvement Association.

"I really didn't expect it," Keller said of the recognition. "I am very excited and sure happy the Halloween Parade Committee accepted me as parade marshal."

"I have been associated with parade since 1962 and I don't think I have missed a year of it since," he said. "I am strictly all Alton. I was actually born in the old St. Joseph Hospital, which is now St. Clare Hospital in Alton. My family lived on Seventh Street in Alton and I attended St. Mary's through eighth grade and then Marquette for high school. I have always belonged to the St. Mary's Parish. I have been a member of the Knights of Columbus. I was also an Alton alderman for 11 years an Alton Housing Authority Commissioner."

Today, Keller is also president of the **Alton Knights of Columbus Quarterback Club**, another community project he sincerely loves. Each year, the club honors area players and in the end has a banquet to present scholarships to winners.

In regard to the Alton Halloween Parade, Keller is most known for coordinating the **costume contest judging** for the event. Some years the trophies and awards were

distributed across from the old **First National Bank Building** where **Riverbender.com** is now, but it is honoring the best of costumes is something he has always enjoyed and it has been a 40-plus year tradition for him. Many involved in the Alton Halloween Parade perform the same tasks year after year so the event can remain the success it is to the public and Keller is definitely one deeply rooted in that.

East End Improvement Association is revered in the Alton community, providing scholarships for children, assisting with the **Bucket Brigade campaign** each year and many other community activities. Keller gets tremendous satisfaction to honoring top area football players and ultimately some scholarships with the Quarterback Club, another well-known area organization.

Bill has been married to his wife Marti since 1977 and the two share five children.

“The East End Improvement Association and the Quarterback Club are both very community-minded organizations,” he said. “They aren’t big organizations but they do a lot of things on the quiet side to help the community.”

Keller has never been one to seek attention for his efforts. As he describes his clubs, he does many of his service to the community “on the quiet side.”

Saturday night, he will be the center of attention through the Alton Halloween Parade and for all the years of service to the parade, the East End Improvement organization, Bucket Brigade, the Quarterback Club, the Alton Housing Authority and more, he deserves a big salute.

“I look forward to it,” Keller said. “I am going to retire from the Alton Housing Authority at the end of this year, so this is coming to the end of my professional career. I feel I have devoted a lot of my lifetime to Alton.

“If you are devoted to the East End Improvement Association and an event like this one for a long time, this type of honor means a lot to you. I will be very honored on Saturday night.”