



Community Christmas program begins this week to benefit more than 6,000 people in Riverbend community

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EAST ALTON — United Way's 26th annual Community Christmas donation drive began Tuesday, November 3, with 94 festive collection boxes being delivered to dozens

of businesses and organizations throughout the Riverbend community. The program collects a wide variety of items for those in need throughout the area to make their holiday season bright.

Donations to be placed in the boxes include non-perishable food items, new clothes for all ages, new winter weather necessities like gloves, hats and scarves, blankets, towels, baby care items, hygiene items, cleaning supplies and of course new toys. Items received will go to 17 local agencies to help more than 6,000 people in need during the holiday season.

Cash donations are also accepted and should be sent to United Way at 707 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 270, East Alton, IL 62024 and marked as Attn: Community Christmas. Monetary donations will go towards buying items on the donation list that were not received in large quantities or for certain age groups. All items and monetary donations for Community Christmas stay in the Riverbend community to help local families.

“United Way’s Community Christmas really is the best local holiday program to make your donation go the furthest and help the most people,” said Megan Allen, 2015 Community Christmas chair and Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery community affairs coordinator. “Since Community Christmas collects a wide variety of items and distributes them through a wide variety of agencies, families are getting a plethora of needs met all from one program. We collect not just toys – but so many essential and basic needs items for families so they can have a great holiday season in every aspect. I’m thrilled to play a part in making the holidays brighter for the Riverbend community through Community Christmas.”



If an organization or group would like to host a box, it's not too late. Contact United Way at 618-258-9800 to have a box, or more, delivered at no cost. Boxes are provided courtesy of Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery.

Community Christmas wraps up on Thursday, December 10, when boxes will be collected from organizations and taken to Main Street United Methodist Church in Alton where item sorting will take place. On Friday, December 11, the 17 recipient agencies will pick up their items to distribute the following week through their various holiday programs.

Last year, Community Christmas collected 17,116 items for the community that were distributed through 15 local agencies. Dawna Gilbreath, Community Christmas coordinator, is hopeful that the program will bring in even more items this year. "Thanks to the generosity of many in the Riverbend and the incredible efforts of Freer Auto Body and the entire Freer family, we are already off to a great start to make this year's program a success. Taylor and Lily Freer already collected more than \$24,000 from their Christmas in July event earlier this year, which is an outstanding and monumental start to the program."

In addition to donating items, volunteers for a variety of activities are needed. Volunteer opportunities include picking up donation-filled boxes once Community Christmas

comes to a close, dropping them off at the sorting location, and sorting and loading the thousands of items for pick-up by the agencies.

For those interested in donating items, hosting a box, volunteering or for more information, call United Way at 618-258-9800. A complete list of organizations that have boxes to drop-off donations can be found on United Way's website at HelpingPeople.org.



About United Way of Greater St. Louis

United Way of Greater St. Louis mobilizes the community with one goal in mind — helping people live their best possible lives. Located throughout 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois, United Way helps one in three people in the region build a foundation for a good quality of life through basic needs, education, financial stability, health and strong communities. For more information, contact 314-421-0700 or visit www.HelpingPeople.org.