

Jones uses his experiences to inspire youth to better things in life

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Greg Jones is a person who used his education at Alton High, then Lewis and Clark Community College and eventually McKendree College to the fullest.

The Alton native was an outfielder for Alton High School's baseball team that was second in the state in 1972. Jones grew up in Alton Acres Housing Complex and he said

when he entered college, he had somewhat of a chip on his shoulders. Jones said his experience playing basketball and baseball at Lewis and Clark Community College and attending the school made a huge difference in his life.

“I changed a lot when I went to LCCC,” he said. “I started to see the bigger picture of life and learn to deal with things like I should. I had a different attitude and I discovered what bitterness I had in me wasn’t taking me anywhere. I met some people there who helped me immensely and help mold me into the person I am today.”

Some of the friends Jones met playing basketball at LCCC remain some of his closest friends today, many years later. Two of his close friends from the team today are Ray Carver and George Terry.

Through his years in education in response to some of his experiences in childhood, Jones attempted to inspire other youths.

He taught remedial math and supervised a young adult program in East St. Louis. He also obtained his master’s degree at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and eventually ended up in Sparta. He was head basketball coach for a while and eventually got his certification from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

He finished his working career as principal of Sparta High School. He has also been a board member for the Illinois High School Association for several years.

The Alton native said he came to the conclusion that some students are blessed and some are slower, but those who are slower deserve equal, if not more attention.

“We had a tutorial program that ran after school,” he said. “We had teachers available for math, science and English. I thought that was very important to help the students who needed extra help.”

Jones sees education as a key to success in life.

“If you are going to progress without education, you are letting life slip away,” he said. “Too many people drop out of school and are missing all the good things in life. We are all blessed with several different talents and can make a difference in whatever you choose to do.”

He is retired today and he said he loves his time playing golf and spending it with his two grandkids.

He still tries to instill pride in whatever young person he can and encourage that if they work as hard as they can, they will achieve great things.

“I try to instill in younger people to be the best they can be,” he said. “If you want something, you will have to work at it or it will never happen. A lot of times things will not happen overnight.”

Today, Jones said he loves coming home and visiting his friends in the Alton-Godfrey area. For him, he said, this will always be a special place.