

# People from area around Salu Park talk trash and rims

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - On Monday, Alton Mayor Brant Walker decided to have the rims of the basketball courts at James Killion Park at Salu taken down due to what was described as an excessive amount of litter at the park.

Walker's Chief of Staff Kimberly Clark said the rims would be returned at a later date, which was yet to be determined. She said the Alton Parks and Recreation Department reported taking as long as two hours before mowing the park for the sole purpose of picking up trash. With 17 parks to maintain and five employees, such a task should not take so much time, she reasoned.

Also, the park has 12-15 trash cans, she said, and several signs warning against littering. Clark said the city has spoken with the NAACP and 100 Black Men Group regarding the litter, hoping a community cleaning effort could be launched.

A local radio personality, Keith on da Beat, as he is known, decided to use his Monday night hip-hop show on WLCA 89.9 FM, the radio station operated by students of Lewis and Clark Community College, to discuss the issue with members of the community around James Killion Park at Salu in order to find a better solution as well as the root of the problem.

*Reporter's note: I was featured on that show and provided background information to the situation.*

"I knew some community leaders the kids look up to, and had them come on the show to help the kids at Salu Park," Keith said. "They are young leaders in the community, and

everybody grew up there. I grew up playing ball at Salu Park. I have friends and family who go up there for birthday parties, play basketball, and celebrate. That's where all the basketball players go for some good competition."

Those young leaders included Brian Green, Basa Brown and Los Angeles-based recording artist Jizzle, who hails from the Alton area, and even called the city to learn the time of the next city council meeting.

Without the rims, Keith said he believes young athletes at the park are being punished for something not entirely their fault. He said he has noticed litter at the park himself, but never enough to bring it to the city's attention.

While he does not agree with the measures taken by the city, Keith does say he understands why the mayor was upset with the litter situation. He said the problem was something the community should fix, but reiterated taking the basketball rims would not solve it.

"I do understand the situation," Keith said. "I know where the mayor and the City of Alton are coming from, but there could have been a better solution. You're going to have trash when you're off a main road. There are a lot of factors going into that littering problem. Where wouldn't you see trash in the park? Especially when it's by a main road like that?"

When asked why he believed both the littering problem and the city's reaction became what they are, Keith said he did not want to point any fingers, but added it all comes down to a miscommunication between both the city and the community around the park.

"There needs to be an understanding," he said. "This is not good communication. It's hard to point fingers. I'm not wanting to get into some 'he said, she said.' I think it is a lack of communication between the community and the City of Alton. Instead of driving by the park and seeing litter, come out to the park and introduce yourself to the kids. Let them know you care as much as they do. We want to represent the same community, and we fail on that, so does the city."

Ultimately, Keith said the area will be much better if everyone agrees to represent the same community.

"As much as they want it clean, we want it clean too," he said.

There will be a rally in support of the kids who play at the park Tuesday evening at 5:15 p.m.

Keith said he will be at the upcoming Alton City Council meeting Wednesday night as well to discuss the issues of litter and lack of rims at James Killion Park at Salu. He said anyone who would like to contribute to a joint solution to the issue should be at that meeting.