

# Diggin' it: Local garden cleaned by volunteer (wo)man power

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**ALTON** - The Hampton Community Gardens in Alton's Fourth Ward were in a cataclysmic state of disrepair following years of neglect.

Those years of neglect ended Tuesday morning when a volunteer coalition spearheaded by Fourth Ward Alderwoman Tammy Smith took to cleaning the gardens. Smith was

joined by the Principia College Women's Soccer Team, Greg Norris's Young Aces, Greater Alton Community Development Corporation (GACDC), PRIDE, Inc. and Street Runnaz Services in a joint effort to restore the community gardens to their proper status.

"I'm the alderman here and people were making several complaints about it," Smith said. "I'm the type of person to set out to do something."



Smith reached Monica Semnacher of the GACDC and PRIDE, Inc. for assistance. Semnacher reached out to Megan Fleming, the coach of the Principia College Women's Soccer Team, because she knew the group was in the midst of a community service week. Fleming brought her team to the garden and worked the tangle of weeds by hand with them.

Principia Women's Soccer Team Captain Maddie Arens said she enjoyed doing the service project.

"I'm so proud of the work that we did," she said. "I'm proud of going to do work in Alton. We love Alton. I'm happy at the fact we were able to give back."

Before the cleaning commenced, Smith said the garden was overgrown taller than she stands (around 5'4"), and the road could not be seen from one end of the lot. She said, after working a third of the garden by hand alongside fellow volunteers, she discovered planting beds, which would have otherwise been concealed by wild growth.

Future maintenance will be provided by Norris and his Young Aces program alongside Keem Mosley of Street Runnaz Service, which is a local business providing outdoor maintenance to many areas of Alton, including mowing, power washing and gutter cleaning.

Norris said next year's growing season would be "fruitful," with many fruits, vegetables and flowers being planned for growth in the community-maintained garden.

