

# Pick it up: Local man issues Facebook challenge for cleaner parks in Alton

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ALTON – Litter has been a topic of conversation across the Riverbend for years – whether it be community litter cleanups or litter at a local park costing basketball rims in 2017.

While there are dedicated cleanups, and they are growing in number across the City of Alton, one man has been posting videos on his Facebook challenging local people to be more conscientious of their surroundings as well as their overall behaviors. On his page, Harrison “Bookey” Henderson, demonstrates how he picks up garbage across the city with a handy purple plastic picker-upper. He picks up plastic bottles, cigarette butts and other items of litter across the city's many parks.

“I usually start after I take my kids to school, so usually around 9-ish, I start going to parks and I walk the surrounding area picking up trash,” he said. “I alternate parks and, if I go to them and they don't have a lot, I just move onto the next one.”

During his cleanups, Henderson said city employees shoot him quizzical glances, including both the parks and rec department and police department.

“I also see the park and rec guys looking at me, kinda wondering what I'm up to,” he said. “The police ride by me also, looking like they are actively trying to analyze my agenda. I have been actively talking to pastors at a couple churches to start a program where youths come and participate in the cleanup.”

Henderson said he is not satisfied with the current conditions of the parks in the area and said people littering are careless, adding the workers often mow over trash instead of picking it up.

“I hate taking my kids to the park and seeing beer bottles and cigarette butts everywhere,” he said. “It's not a good luck for our children. If they see us grown-ups not caring about our community, then they won't either.”

Since June, Henderson said he has been walking through the parks of Alton – mostly alone – to freshen the scenery. Currently, he targets James Killion Park at Salu, Haskell, Hellrung and the park under the Clark Bridge. He said he also goes to Gordon Moore after baseball or soccer games.

“I have been talking about trying to start and organizing something similar to the Boys and Girls Club,” he said. “The only thing I really wanted our message to be about was saving our children and saving our city, while also saving the world. I know picking up trash won't change the world overnight, but it's leading by example. Our children will meet thousands of people on their journeys, and if we instill general morals, it can ignite a flame that can be passed on for generations. Right now, we are breeding killers and thieves and teaching them not to care about anyone – each other or the world.”

When asked why he started doing it in June, Henderson said he had been inspired to do something, but did not know where he could help. He also said he would welcome the company if anyone wanted to join him in cleaning parks.

“Yes, I would love to have help,” he said. “Don't get me wrong, I look forward to doing it, but if there was less for me to pick up, I would be overjoyed.”

“Every other day, there is usually trash. Some parks are frequented more than others, so I pay those parks more attention. Also, the day after trash day is a great time to find tons of trash on the streets. So Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the streets be littered up.”

As for the worst parks in Alton – as far as litter is concerned – Henderson said Killion and Hellrung are the most covered in trash, but he has found drug bags and needles at Haskell.