

Splash Pad Coming to Alton Will Make Outdoor Learning Fun

September 18 2019 11:38 AM



ALTON – The City of Alton Parks and Recreation has been selected as a Building Better Communities grant recipient from the American Water Charitable Foundation (AWCF) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The City of Alton is one of two communities in the country awarded \$250,000 for this grant in 2019.

The new water play feature will provide children and the young at heart an opportunity to play in the water, while learning about the value of water and local water resources. The project will be a collaboration between AWCF, NRPA, Illinois American Water and the City of Alton.

Community parks like Riverfront Park are vital to connecting children to nature. Water-focused and nature-based play areas foster an appreciation for environmental stewardship while providing opportunities for physical activity. In Alton, community members will benefit from the future splash pad which will be located near Alton's greatest natural asset in Riverfront Park, near the downtown area.

“We love getting the opportunity to build a recirculating splash pad on the Riverfront. In addition to the summer fun, it will bring, it creates the ideal opportunity to educate visitors about the role of the river in our area by using signage and unique water-play interactions depicting the ecological water cycle. The splash pad will be free of charge and fully accessible to everyone through ADA compliance,” said Michael Haynes, Director of Alton Parks and Recreation.

Through the Building Better Communities grant program, the City of Alton will receive \$250,000 to create the first-ever, large-scale water play experience for the Alton community. Alton sits on the Mississippi River, but due to a floodwall, it does not have direct access to much of the riverfront and the city does not have a public pool or splash pad. The splash pad will overlook the river, allowing residents to enjoy the water in a natural setting. This will also provide the opportunity to educate residents and visitors about water stewardship. The project will be within view of the Melvin Price Lock and Dam and educate the public about the importance of the Mississippi River and how it impacts the community.

The American Water Charitable Foundation is committed to participating and investing in programs that benefit communities served by American Water. "We are pleased to partner with the City of Alton Parks and Recreation to provide this outdoor space so children and families can learn, interact and appreciate water, a critical natural resource, in a fun and engaging way," said Carrie Williams, American Water Charitable Foundation President.

“Ensuring children and families can experience water and have access to water-based education and nature play spaces is key to building the next generation of environmental stewards,” said Karl Schrass, NRPA Director of Conservation. “We are proud to support this important work through our partnership with the American Water Charitable Foundation and encourage communities everywhere to explore the wonders of nature through their local parks and recreation.”

Illinois American Water will also contribute to the project by providing sweat equity when appropriate and in-kind resources. Karen Cooper, Sr. Manager for the Southern Division, said, “We have a strong presence in the vibrant community of Alton with our customer service center, water service operations and most recent wastewater service operations. But our commitment to Alton goes beyond these core services we provide. We believe in being a good neighbor and that every child deserves an opportunity to play and have fun while learning about water. Our local team is excited to collaborate on this project which will also encourage the continued viability and protection of our precious water resources.”

For more information about the Building Better Communities program, visit <http://www.nrpa.org/buildingbettercommunities>.