

# **SALT Partners With CITY2 To Host Youth Soccer Camp In Alton**

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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ALTON - Student-Athletes Leading Tomorrow (SALT), a non-profit based out of Alton, came together with STL CITY2 and New Dimensions of St. Louis soccer club to host a week-long youth soccer camp.

The camp runs from Monday, July 11 through Thursday, July 14 from 6-7 p.m. On Friday the camp will conclude with a cookout. The camp is being held at James Killion Park located at 2400 Washington Ave. in Alton.

Damian Jones, the Executive Director at SALT, co-founded the nonprofit with his wife Dr. D'Andrienne Jones. The two are always looking for ways to benefit the community, especially when it can regard to sports.

"SALT was founded with the idea of introducing kids to new and different sports, but using the platform of sports to engage and be present in children's lives," Jones said.

"The other thing that we're trying to do is share nutrition health wellness concepts with the kids; the benefit of being active, being physically fit, and starting that at a young age so that it can become a lifestyle, something you carry with you the rest of your life," he added.

On Tuesday, the camp's second day, three STL CITY2 players came out to sign autographs, talk with the kids, and help teach them to love the game of soccer. It's actually a funny story about how the CITY2 players came about the camp.

The Jones' son was a college soccer player at Missouri State University. As it turns out, their son is pretty good friends with a few CITY2 players who also attended MSU. One of those players was CITY2's goalkeeper Michael Creek. He was there at the youth camp on Tuesday with CITY2 teammates Dida Armstrong and Kyle Hiebert.

According to Jones, it was a "light lift" to call out some of the professional players to come and participate in the camp.

Creek was born and raised in St. Louis and loved being able to give back to his local community by attending the youth camp.

"It's honestly an awesome experience," Creek said. "I mean, I started off playing in a park field where the grass was too long, and for them to be starting young, who knows where they can go."

"We've seen it all around the world that soccer can take people from any background and bring them the highest of highs," Creek said.

Creek mentioned that the camp was to give back to the community and to spread the love of soccer. Damian Jones loved that the CITY players came out to the camp.

"It's important I think for these young men as well, to understand the power that they possess to influence young lives," Jones said.

"Boys and girls look to them and aspire to be like them and these are such great young men, I know each one of them personally. It's nice that they get an opportunity to see

how their platform can really be used to impact children's lives in a positive way. It's really fortunate that we have access to them," he said.

Once the camp is over, soccer won't be leaving the Alton area anytime soon.

SALT has a contract with the United States Soccer Foundation, the primary non-profit for youth soccer and soccer-based youth development in America, according to Jones.

Jones said that through fundraising and partnership with the Safe Places to Play Program, a national field-building initiative, they have full intentions of building a mini field, or what's known as a futsal court, somewhere within Rock Springs Park.

No timeline is currently set for the field, but nonetheless, it will be a great addition to the park and the community.

It's not too late to attend the camp. The skill portion of the camp ends tomorrow, Thursday, July 14. If interested in joining or for more information contact Jones at [damian.jones@saltyouth.org](mailto:damian.jones@saltyouth.org) or call (618) 960-4473.