

# Boys & Girls Club Opens New Community Playground

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
June 8 2023 6:10 PM



ALTON - The Alton Boys & Girls Club celebrated their playground renovation with a ribbon cutting ceremony today. The playground, located at 2512 Amelia Street in Alton, has updated equipment and a safer fall surface.

“This is for not just the Boys & Girls Club,” Al Womack, executive director of the Alton Boys and Girls Club, said. “This is for the community.”

The Boys & Girls Club organized the renovation. Several local businesses sponsored the project. Donors, school board members and local politicians were in attendance, as well as kids who were eager to test out the new equipment.

Many attendants noted the benefits of another community park and the work that the Boys and Girls Club does for Alton. The playground is located on the Boys & Girls Club building property, but it will remain open for all community members.

“These kinds of community events are really the heartbeat of everything in our districts,” Erica Harriss, state senator in the 56th district, said. “Springfield is where laws are being made, but here in our communities are where people are living and that, to me, is where real life is happening.”

Womack said the project has been underway for over two years. They were originally going to just replace the old playground equipment, but the Boys & Girls Club ultimately decided to bulldoze the playground and build it up from scratch. Several donors noted they were pleased with this decision to give the kids the best.

“It’s all about the children,” Alderman Rosetta Brown said. “We got to keep them safe. We got to keep the upgrades good so that they can enjoy what the community has for them.”

Alton Mayor David Goins echoed this sentiment.

“Anything that enhances the quality of life for our children is always a plus,” Goins said.

The playground is open, but renovations aren’t over yet. The space will soon include a “buddy bench” in honor of Ariana Scoggins, a Boys & Girls Club member who lost her life to brain cancer. Anyone who sits on the buddy bench is looking for a buddy; the goal is that another kid will come and join them on the bench. “One of Ariana’s favorite things to say was, ‘And yet, here we are,’” said Angela Scoggins, Ariana’s mother. “Her plaque on her bench will say that. So if the kid is happy or mad or however they feel, they can hopefully read the plaque and be like, ‘Well, and yet, here we are. We’re here still.’”

The Boys & Girls Club is a national organization that offers after-school and summer programs to kids and teens. The Alton chapter works with approximately 600 kids every year and emphasizes leadership, educational and life skills.

“We love our kids in this community, and we think our kids deserve the best,” Womack said of the chapter’s goals. “We want to make sure that we are creating a great future for our youth and giving them a place to become whatever it is they would like to become and, in the meantime, making sure that there’s fun and engaging activities that take place.”

In a prime example of these goals in action, one Boys & Girls Club member encouraged Alton businessman and donor John Simmons to go down the new slide. When Simmons hesitated at the top of the slide, the boy told him to, “Believe in yourself.”

Learn more about the Alton Boys & Girls Club at [their website](#).