

Smallwood Bey New Leader: Alton Branch of the NAACP Outlines New Goals

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The Alton branch of the NAACP will focus on increasing job opportunities, homeownership and entrepreneurship in the Black community with Leon Smallwood Bey as the organization's new president.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is an activist organization that advocates for civil rights and social justice for Black people across the U.S. The local branch embodies these ideas and also plans to develop youth-specific programs for Alton residents.

“We know it takes a village to raise up a community. It takes unity, and we want to be the vehicle that tries to spearhead the unity in our community,” Smallwood Bey said. “We want to be a part of showing people that we will fight against injustice, discrimination and racial inequality anywhere that it occurs.”

To increase community involvement, the group hopes to form more connections with local businesses, schools and politicians.

One of Smallwood Bey’s personal goals is to reinstate the NAACP Youth Council. The Alton branch’s Youth Council dissolved in 2006, but he said there is a renewed interest in the group. Anyone up to age 25 is welcome to join.

“This is a way we can get these young future leaders in a position to know what to do and how to do it, and we can assist them in doing the things to guide us into the future. We can take their lead, as well,” Smallwood Bey explained.



Ideally, the Youth Council will identify some of the issues that young people face in the Riverbend region. They can then receive support from each other and the rest of the Alton NAACP branch. Smallwood Bey hopes young people will develop leadership skills through the NAACP Youth Council that they will eventually use to lead Alton.

“I want them to be able to tell us the things that we need to be doing to try to assist them. We want to put them in a position where they can grow,” Smallwood Bey said. “We want them to be able to help us in economic, educational, social and political status, and show them how we can stand up against racial disparities, discrimination and injustice as a whole and level the playing field for them and be able to create better opportunities for them.”

The Alton NAACP branch meets at 7 p.m. every fourth Tuesday of the month at Tango Event Center in Alton. To learn more about the NAACP and their mission, visit their [official website](#). You can join the organization on [this webpage](#), and they will connect you with the local Alton branch.

Anyone who is interested in joining the Youth Council can reach out to Smallwood Bey directly. If you have questions or want to contact the Alton branch, you can call him at 618-216-0941.