

Athletic Club Supports Sports Activities and Instills Community Spirit in Youth

December 9, 2009

[By Frank Prager](#)

Today's AdVantage

One measure of the quality of a community is the commitment of its adults to the area's youth and their future. A few years back, a group of people from the Alton and Godfrey areas recognized a need for a sports program providing kids a chance to play youth and high school level baseball outside of the typical legion and high school organized teams. In the Fall of 2007, the Bluff City Athletic Club organized its first teams and it has been expanding its program ever since.

The president and one of the founding members of the organization, Greg Volner, explains the philosophy behind Bluff City Athletic Club's approach. "We wanted to set something up that would continue into the future, not just something that would end when our kids were done with it," he says. He goes on to note that the founders also felt community service should be part of the fabric of the organization, instilling a community spirit in the club's members as well as supporting their athletic activities.

While the majority of the club's team members are from the Alton and Godfrey areas, there are also participants from outlying areas such as Jerseyville, Brighton and Belleville. The baseball teams play against teams from select leagues in the metro east area. Tryouts for the teams were held in August and September and drew over 220 participants. Teams will practice over the winter and begin playing in the Spring. Bluff City Athletic Club contracts with the Alton School System to utilize facilities at Irving School for practice.

Volner explains that the club works closely with coaches from Alton schools to conduct clinics and shape the program in a way that will be beneficial to the school systems. "We want to understand what the high school coaches want to see in a feeder system for their teams," Volner says. He says the high school coaches put on a clinic for club coaches, providing guidance on how to run practices, make teams fun and keep the kids interested in the program.

Bluff City Athletic Club has expanded since its inception and is implementing programs in softball, basketball and volleyball. Volner says the club will field as many teams as there is interest to support. He points out there are over 50 adult volunteers associated with the organization.

From a community service standpoint, the club is involved in a myriad of activities. Members serve as bell ringers for the Salvation Army. The club conducts a free sports clinic with Fredbird in attendance every year for kids between the ages of six and twelve. They are participants in the March Of Dimes Champion For Babies Family Picnic and have enlisted in the local area Bucket Brigade. As of September, Bluff City Athletic Club had 1,879 community service hours this year.

The organization is not for profit and funding for the team activities comes from fundraisers and participant fees. Volner points out that the club provides a number of activities through which youth can raise money to go toward team participation. He notes that pizza sales and spaghetti dinner fundraisers are held every year as well as a Bluff City Day at Busch Stadium. Those with top ticket sales to Bluff City Day not only raise money but also get to participate in special activities such as going down on the field during batting practice.

The Bluff City Athletic Club provides a unique and valuable support system for local youth athletics. More information is available on the web at www.bluffcityathletics.com. Anyone interested in participating on teams or volunteering with the organization can email them at info@bluffcityathletics.com or call Greg Volner directly at 917-5437.