

Alton Section of National Council of Negro Women Aims to Give Back and Empower Youth

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The Alton Section of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) wants people to know they're here to help the community.

As a national nonprofit, the NCNW's goal is to advance opportunities and empower African American women. Tanjela Johnson, vice president of the Alton Section, said the local chapter has been in existence for 42 years. They collaborate with other organizations, and they have a youth section so they can connect with and support young people throughout the Riverbend.

"Our mission is to be involved in the community," Johnson summarized. "Throughout the community, when we see a need, we try to be present and help out where we can."

The organization regularly participates in the First Presbyterian Church's Saturday Café events. NCNW members serve meals every month, and they often donate the proceeds from their events to the Saturday Café fund at the church. They also collaborate with groups like the Alton Boys and Girls Club.

“I would say it is the most important part of our organization, being involved in the community, giving back to the community, working with the youth,” Johnson explained. “We try to coordinate with different community groups that identify needs in the community, and we try to see what we can do to have a positive impact.”

Empowering young people is an important part of the NCNW’s purpose. Johnson said their youth section currently has 23 students from Alton High School, Marquette Catholic High School and Mississippi Valley Christian School. The students identify needs and work on community projects around the area.

The youth section provides important “mentorship opportunities,” Johnson said, and they also give out an annual scholarship to a student with a C-average or better. Johnson noted that it is important to include students who might not receive other scholarships, and the money can go toward any trade school, two-year or four-year institution.

The NCNW also sponsors an annual cotillion for a small group of young ladies who want to learn more about etiquette and empowerment. Johnson said this year’s group will go through several workshops to promote self-esteem and teach useful skills.

“We’re going through etiquette training, we’re going through financial literacy, we’re talking about self-esteem, empowerment, poise, all of those things that students may not get in the traditional school setting, but they’re important for going to college or their next step in their life,” she said.

Ultimately, the Alton Section of the NCNW aims to be involved in the community and help out as much as possible. Johnson encourages anyone who wants to know more about the organization to check out their [official website at AltonSectionNCNWInc.org](http://AltonSectionNCNWInc.org) or follow their [Facebook page](#) to stay up-to-date with their events and activities. She asks that people reach out with any questions or volunteer opportunities by contacting altonsection@gmail.com.



“I would say we are a small group, but we really look for opportunities to be present throughout the community,” Johnson added. “If anyone knows of anything or how we can serve or assist with anything in the community, they can reach out to us through our NCNW website.”