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Bowling Green residents tackle trash

By CAROLINE EGGERS ceggers@bgdailynews.com Mar 16, 2019



Karissa Lemon (second from right), with the City-County Planning Commission, talks with volunteers Hallie Pennington (from left), Katie Antle, and Donna Angle Saturday, March 16, 2019, during Operation P.R.I.D.E.'s "Clean the Green" community cleaning day at Kereiakes Park. (Bac Totrong/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Bac Totrong/Daily News

About 75 volunteers in neon green vests marched along Bowling Green roads and greenways Saturday to pick up trash – piece by painstaking piece – during Operation P.R.I.D.E.’s inaugural “Clean the Green.”

There were McDonald’s cups, laundry detergent tubs, plastic bags, books, cigarettes and even pieces of furniture.

Ryan Murphy, manager of SpeedWash Car Wash in Bowling Green, diligently squatted and scrounged for litter along River Street near Weldon Peete Park. It’s not a task unfamiliar to Murphy.

“We pick up a lot of trash at the car wash,” he said, so he enlisted the help of some co-workers to participate in the cleanup. “We want to get more involved in (bettering) the community.”

The work proved somewhat challenging Saturday because the trash – predominantly bottles, cans and cigarettes – was buried into layers of debris and brush.

But “if we see it, we’re going to try to get it,” Murphy said.

Cigarette butts were the hardest to pick up, according to Anthony Falcone of SpeedWash Car Wash. He participated in cleanups when he was younger, and happily agreed to volunteer after Murphy reached out to his team.

“It’s been so long that anyone has cleaned this stuff up, that it’s kind of just become part of (the soil),” Falcone said. “I expected to see a lot ... but it’s more than I expected.”

Three students with the Habitat for Humanity Western Kentucky University campus chapter also picked up trash along the River Street corridor.

“Usually on Saturday mornings I’d just be sleeping in. I feel like I get to wake up and do something actually meaningful and productive,” Jordyn Hurley said.

“I actually like it. It makes me feel like I’m making a difference,” Parker Brennan said, “and I like cleaning.”

“I feel like we should take care of our home,” Chelsea Smith said.

Though the girls weren’t exactly surprised by the litter volume, they were surprised by the types of litter.

“We found an old couch that was probably there for over 10 or 15 years because it was just so rotten,” Smith said.

Volunteers were divided into five focus areas: the greenways near Kroger, the Dollar General on Porter Pike, Weldon Pete Park, Creekwood and Old Porter Pike.

There were several individuals volunteering, but most people came with a group, such as members of WKU Greek organizations, the WKU MBA program, the local chapter of the Sierra Club and an area Boy Scout troop.

The day before, volunteers from Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College cleaned from Warren Elementary School to the Walmart on Morgantown Road, which was one of the other areas initially identified. Several of those volunteers showed up Saturday to clean as well.

Republic Services, an event partner, provided five dumpsters for each main site and several staff members to oversee the litter pickup.



Todd Chamberlain of Republic Services offered tips on safety, and expressed enthusiasm for the inaugural event.

“Events like this are really exciting when it’s the first year,” Chamberlain said.

Karissa Lemon, coordinator for the City-County Planning Commission, oversaw the litter pickup on River Street, and expressed gratitude for the number of community members willing to beautify their city. Lemon helps manage the city’s greenways through Bike/Walk BG, so she was aware of the trash situation.

“We can continually work on picking it up, but I think litter is a natural part of living,” Lemon said.

Angie Alexieff, executive director of Operation P.R.I.D.E., selected greenways near businesses and busy roads because the litter isn’t as visible as other frequently traveled paths.

“It’s not obvious to everyone,” Alexieff said.

Andrea Strange, the public outreach coordinator for the Warren County Division of Stormwater Management, helped organize the event as a partner of Operation P.R.I.D.E.

“Anytime that you can pick up trash and keep it out of our infrastructure and out of our waterways makes a huge impact, and protects our natural resources,” Strange said.

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