ORGANIZING
COMMUNITY CLEANUP EVENTS

HOW TO BEGIN:
Organizing a cleanup event can be as simple as getting a group together, grabbing a bag, and walking. In other cases, a more organized effort is needed. This might include setting up a committee, selecting sites to clean, gaining permission from the city, county or private land owners, and identifying sources to receive and/or pick up filled bags. Review the information to determine if these are appropriate steps for your community cleanup project.

STEP 1: ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE
When establishing a committee, it should be made up of representatives from at least three of the following sectors: government, business, media, schools, churches/synagogues and civic groups. These committee members can help with the many details involved with volunteer outreach and awareness plans, as well as getting the job done. Members of the committee should be individuals who are enthusiastic, energetic, and dependable through all assigned tasks. Individuals who have contacts in the community and can reach new sources of volunteers are really helpful. Establishing a committee will spread the workload and enable you to plan a smoothly run and successful cleanup.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE TASKS:
- Recruiting volunteer groups (you may want to assign specific volunteer sectors to different members)
- Scouting out littered sites
- Soliciting in-kind donations from businesses and wastes haulers/recyclers
- Seeking media supporters
- Seeking participation of VIPs
- Helping out as coordinators or "runners" during the event day
- Marketing the program (i.e. using posters, local media announcements, etc.)
- Serving as a spokesperson for the program

PROGRAM PLANS:
The coordinator of the cleanup project should complete a set of program plans outlining the methods your organization will use to generate awareness and motivate volunteers. Describe in detail those activities that will take place during your local cleanup. Plans are critical to help communities set goals and continue to grow the program successfully.

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE TIME FRAME
Cleanup activities can occur on any date. When determining the time frame for your local cleanup program, check local and regional calendars of events. Try to avoid conflicts with other community events, such as parades, fairs, school breaks or county-wide testing.

Does a one day, one-week, two-week, or month-long effort best fit the needs of your community? Check with your local waste haulers, volunteer groups, neighborhood associations, VIPs and other parties involved with the effort to determine what best works for them and for your organization. When you have confirmed the date(s) for your effort be sure to register your program date(s) with the local Chamber of Commerce and/or volunteer center. That way, other groups will be less likely to schedule events on your cleanup program dates. Also, promote the date well ahead with a short media alert.

STEP 3: CHOOSE A LOCATION
Litter removal and beautification activities encourage community-wide efforts. Work with the local public works or sanitation departments as well as your community centers and/or downtown partnership organization to determine what areas in your community have been trashed with litter.

BOUNDARIES:
Once you have decided what area(s) to target, establish cleanup boundaries. Remember to set realistic goals- trying to clean too large an area will only make your efforts seem small. Consider dividing long stretches of land into mile sections.

ZONE CAPTAINS:
Naming zone captains is helpful for large cleanup or beautification projects. These individuals make sure their cleanup runs smoothly and sagely, and they report participation and collection results. Captains can be placed strategically along the cleanup locations.

STEP 4: WHERE THE LITTER ENDS UP
Contact your community's sanitation department (check with the public works department or the city secretary) or the county judge's office to tell them about your cleanup plans. One of these departments will likely be able to tell you who is responsible for hauling the waste collected during the cleanup. If your local sanitation department cannot handle the job or your cleanup is not within its jurisdiction, you might be told to contact private waste haulers. Be sure to coordinate a complete schedule of trash bag pickups that includes each cleanup location. A bag of trash has an average of 20 pounds.

TIPPING FEES:
Landfills and some transfer stations charge for disposal. This charge is called a tipping fee and is based on weight. Occasionally, these fees are waived and considered landfill operator's in-kind contribution to your program. Other times, the local government may pay the fees or a hauler may cover the fee as a donation to the program. You should determine as quickly as possible who will pay this cost.
RECYCLABLES:
Hauling recyclables might have special needs based on the requirements of the recycling collection center. If you are collecting a material that is not regularly collected by your community, you will need to make arrangements for these materials to be collected or dropped-off. Check with the waste hauler or regional council of government for possible recycling collectors.

STEP 5: SETTING UP A TRACKING SYSTEM
Before your cleanup project begins, it is important to set up a system for tracking the amount of litter collected. Knowing the results of every cleanup event helps us promote our accomplishments in the local and national media and to our national and state sponsors as we continue to expand the program.

SUGGESTED CLEANUP LOCATIONS:

- Parks
- Natural areas
- Non-profit organization properties
- Neighborhoods
- Other public areas

Sometimes permits must be obtained to cleanup and beautify certain areas. Appoint someone to find out what permits are required.

You need to determine if the property is public or private. If private property is involved you will need permission from the landowner, preferably in writing.

For information about Alabama’s adopt-a-mile highway cleanup program visit: Alabama PALS Website (www.alpals.org/content.cfm?page=adoptamile)
CHECKLIST:

3 MONTHS BEFORE

- Confirm cleanups and rain dates (date, location, time)
- Confirm cleanup boundaries and beautification project locations based on sponsor programs
- Coordinate with local waste haulers and recyclers on the pickup, transport and disposal of the collected litter/recyclables
- Organize a way to distribute materials and bags

2 MONTHS BEFORE

- Plan an agenda for your target event day
- Plan drop-off location(s) for all collected materials
- Obtain any permits needed to secure a safe event
- Follow up and confirm plans and dates with local waste haulers/recyclers regarding pickup, deliver and disposal of collected litter/recyclables

1 TO 2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Check, check and triple check logistics!

DAY OF EVENT

- Make sure site coordinators are in place at designated locations!
- Smile and have FUN!
- Thank everyone involved including you!