

COMMUNITY CLEANUP GUIDE

The University of Alabama
Center for Economic
Development

COMMUNITY CLEANUP EVENTS



Timeframe:

Preparations for a successful clean-up project should begin at least 2 months in advance of the event. Organizing the event is very important. Review the information in this Toolkit, which serves as a guideline to assist you with planning your event. A checklist is provided.

PLANNING THE CLEANUP

Organize Your Crew

Identify a Planning Committee of 3 to 6 volunteers to organize the project. This could include a local citizen, a member of government, local business owner, staff of your local school system, local church members, and youth within your community. Arrange a meeting of the Planning Committee to plan the event and assign roles throughout the project. This should be a FUN project, so choose individuals that will make the project fun AND competitive - so folks will work hard and be proud of the results! Individuals who have contacts in the community and are able to reach new sources of volunteers are vital, so forming the Planning Committee is key to ensuring success. Establishing a Planning Committee will spread the workload and enable you to plan an effective clean-up project. Plans are critical to help communities set goals and continue to grow the program successfully.

Select a Volunteer Coordinator

The coordinator, or co-coordinators will guide the committee as project plans are developed to outline the methods the group will use to generate awareness and motivate volunteers. The plans should include detailed activities that will take place during the event. Assign the Planning Committee tasks during the planning process as well as throughout the event. Your plan should include the following: *Name your clean-up project; Select a date; How many teams will you need; How long will your clean-up project last – determine beginning and ending times; How will you get needed supplies; How will trash bags be distributed; Who will take photos; Who will distribute water, how will it be distributed; Who will check-in volunteers on the day of the event; What information do you need at check-in (i.e. name/phone/email, etc.); Who will give assignments as to where the teams begin the project; Who will man a First Aid station; What is the plan for disposal of the trash; Who will handle marketing the event; What kind of signage is needed; Who will send thank you – will they be sent via e-mail, Facebook, local newspaper, etc.*



Select a Date

Select a date to launch the clean-up project. An ideal day to hold a clean-up project is on Earth Day - April 22 or a Saturday before or after the celebrated day. "Changing the world starts by changing your own little corner of it." Organizing an Earth Day event or activity is one of the best ways to engage your community to protect the planet. Review the section: Other Resources to Consider to learn how to obtain an Earth Day Toolkit.

Choose a Location

Identify areas in your community to be cleaned that are safe and accessible. Be creative! It may be that you need to plan for consecutive clean-up projects depending on the needs in your community. Be sure to contact the appropriate individuals to ensure that you have permission to be there and determine what to do with the trash and recyclables you collect. You may need to check with your local sanitation department, neighborhood associations, Park and Recreation Authority to get approval. Be sure to ask if a permit is required.



Possible Locations for Your Cleanup Project:

- Parks
- Neighborhoods
- Vacant lots
- Roadsides
- Schoolyards
- Town Square

Possible Groups to Contact to Find Volunteers:

- Local Churches/Schools (elementary, middle and high school)
- Civic Groups: Kiwanis, Rotary, Jaycees, Civitan
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts Troops
- 4-H Groups
- Neighborhood Associations/Garden Clubs
- Professional Associations
- Local Businesses
- Media (local newspaper/radio/TV station): utilize the media to attract volunteers and reinforce your message about the project.

Recruit Volunteers

Sometimes it's easier to recruit groups rather than individuals to participate in a community activity like a clean-up project. Contact local churches and schools to ask them to help form teams of volunteers. Consider organizing contests between teams to get them enthused.

Encourage friends, family, local citizens, private land owners, churches and schools, neighbors, local business owners, to participate in the project. And don't forget to include the YOUTH in your community. **Remember, there is POWER in numbers!** Get people together, get them personally motivated to succeed! You may

also wish to recruit family groups that include two to three generations of participants. What a great story for your local newspaper and radio stations to highlight: **"Three Generations Join in the 'Sign-Up to Clean-Up' Project"**.

Sponsors/Support Organizations

Determine if you will need sponsors for your event. Sponsors can be asked to donate trash bags, bottled water, snacks, disposable hand wipes, hand sanitizer, poster board for signage, buckets, recycle containers, tape or zip-ties to tie up bags, First Aid supplies, etc. They may even donate manpower, or assist with printing flyers, printing of T-shirts, etc. Ask local businesses to donate prizes to be presented to the team that collects the most number of bags of litter. You may consider using a luggage scale or fish scale to weigh the bags collected, and present prizes to the team that collects the most pounds of trash. **If you don't ask for support, you won't receive it!**

Possible Sponsors You May Consider

- **Local Businesses:** Grocery Stores may donate trash bags, bottled water or snacks; local businesses may donate door prizes/incentives for the team members; your local hardware store may donate trash bags, buckets, recycle bins, etc. Make sure the local businesses understand that by supporting the clean-up project, they can build their business. Businesses want to connect with projects and activities that present a positive message to the community!
- **Local County Commission:** Ask the Commission to provide dumpsters (free of charge) in various locations during the clean-up event to make the community more beautiful.

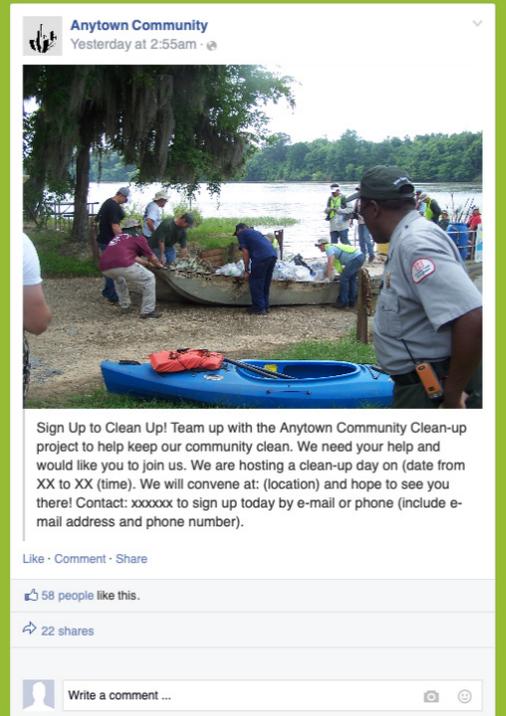
Develop a Marketing Plan and Publicize

Your marketing plan could be as simple as: 1) Facebook posts – letting people know WHEN the clean-up event will take place. Include the date, time of event, where the event will begin, and how individuals can participate (see right for an example). 2) Flyers: Develop a flyer with the same information as the Facebook post, hang in store windows, put on car windshields at the local grocery store, hardware store, include information in church bulletins, etc. 3) Ask business owners to include details about the clean-up event on their websites, store windows/doors, etc. 4) Contact your local newspaper, radio stations to publicize; 5) Ask the Chamber to add to their website, etc.

Get Supplies

Determine what kinds of supplies you will need (work gloves [or have volunteers bring gloves], trash bags, buckets, trash receptacles, etc.; bottled water, snacks, sign-in sheet for volunteers [to enable you to thank the volunteers via e-mail], First Aid kit for minor cuts and scrapes, zip ties; hand sanitizer, disposable hand wipes, poster board and markers, shovels, rakes, etc.

Sample Facebook Post:



DURING THE CLEANUP

Have a Planning Committee member take photos of the event, distribute water and snacks.
Have a Planning Committee member stay at the check-in location in case of emergencies
Instruct volunteers what to do with the filled bags of trash.
Have Planning Committee members pick up filled bags and take to designated drop-off locations.



AFTER THE CLEANUP

Express your THANKS by sharing the results! Include photos and a short article in the local newspaper and town website identifying the volunteers, and include the number of trash bags collected or the weight of all trash (if using scales).

Send a Facebook post or e-mail to volunteers saying “Look What We Collected” with photos and the number or pounds of bags collected. This will more than likely encourage others to participate in future events! Ask volunteers to share their own stories, experiences and personal photos on Facebook, etc.

Identify ANOTHER clean-up day while the enthusiasm is high!

SAFETY TIPS

Find a Planning Committee member that has medical training or knows basic First Aid in case of a health emergency. When determining the sites to be cleaned, keep in mind to look for poisonous plants, power lines, broken glass or sharp items or other safety hazards. Encourage volunteers to dress appropriately, and wear tennis shoes or boots.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

Keep a record of your success, and make notes on how you can improve the next clean-up project.

NOTES:

OTHER RESOURCES TO CONSIDER

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers: (1-800-865-8337) – has a hotline to match you up with opportunities. https://search.usa.gov/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&affiliate=mobile_district&query=clean+up

The Nature Conservancy: working to protect Alabama for people and nature; assist with getting rid of invasive species, cleaning up natural areas, maintaining fences, assist with prescribed burns. <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/?s=Alabama>

National Earth Day - April 22: - Visit the website for an Earth Day Toolkit where you will find everything you need to organize an event in your area. <http://www.earthday.org/?s=tool+kit+for+earth+day>

National Public Lands Day: (usually near the end of September) – they help find ways to give volunteers a way to get involved. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/planningprojects.htm>

Alabama Power Company/Alabama Power Foundation/Alabama Power Service Organization and Energizers: Retirees involved in their communities support a range of environmental programs and are involved in many community service projects. <https://www.alabamapower.com/our-company/in-the-community/community-programs.html>

Alabama RC&D Councils: nonprofit organizations that are made up of volunteers who identify the unmet needs in the communities and create solutions. <http://alabamarcd.org/rcd-councils-contacts/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: provide ways for people to plan projects that will make their communities a better place to live. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/al/people/volunteers/>

Alabama Cooperative Extension System: learn how a local Alabama county held their first county-wide clean-up day: <http://offices.aces.edu/tallapoosa/throw-away-day-county-wide-cleanupsaturday-april-23rd/>; Alabama 4-H: <http://www.aces.edu/4-H-youth/AL4-H/index.php>

Alabama Department of Environmental Management: learn about recycling, and how to enhance the awareness of recycling <http://adem.alabama.gov/MoreInfo/pubs/ADEMCommunityEngagement.pdf> -

NOTES:

CHECKLIST

Two Months Before Event

- Identify Planning Crew – arrange initial planning meeting, assign duties, select a coordinator or co-coordinators for the project
- Confirm clean-up date/time/location (obtain permission from land owner – check to see if permits are required)
- Confirm cleanup boundaries – arrange for drop-off locations with the sanitation department
- Contact County Commission to request free dumpsters and/or coordinate with local waste haulers and recyclers on the pickup, transport and disposal of the collected trash/litter/recyclables. Determine drop-off locations for trash
- Contact Sponsors/Supporters to request supplies (trash bags/buckets/recycle bins/ bottled water/snacks/First Aid kit for minor scrapes/T-shirts (optional), poster board for signage, hand sanitizer, disposable gloves, etc.
- Planning Committee discuss how and who to recruit for volunteers; determine if sign-up forms are needed
- Begin the process of promoting the event to:
Local Churches; Local Schools; Civic Groups: Kiwanis/Rotary/Jaycees/Civitan; Boy Scout and Girl Scout Troops; 4-H Groups; Neighborhood Associations; Garden Clubs; Professional Associations; Local Businesses; Media Coverage: Local Newspaper, Local Radio Stations, Local TV Station
 - 1) develop Facebook/website blurb (see sample)
 - 2) develop flyer to promote to businesses/schools/churches through church bulletins/newsletters/website (see sample)

One Month Before Event

- Hold additional Planning Committee Meeting to report on number of volunteers to participate – continue with recruitment and report on Sponsor/Supporter confirmations
- Plan an agenda for your clean-up day
- Review plan for drop-off locations for all collected materials and confirm transport and disposal of the collected trash/litter/recyclables.
- Confirm permits (if required) are obtained to secure a safe event
- Confirm Sponsor/Supporters and arrange for pick-up of donated supplies

Two Weeks Before Event

- Check, check and triple check logistics!
- Follow up and confirm plans and dates with local waste haulers/recyclers regarding pickup, delivery and disposal of collected litter/recyclables

One Week Before Event

- Make Signs for Check-In and First Aid Station
- Pick up Supplies, arrange for ice if needed for water
- Planning Committee meet to review the clean-up plan
- Review Planning Committee assignments
- Assign Planning Committee member to bring table/chairs for check-in and First Aidstations

Day of Event

- Set up Check-in Station and First Aid Station
- Distribute trash bags to specific locations
- Make sure site coordinators are in place at designated locations!
- Smile and have FUN!
- Thank everyone involved!