

Tips for Organizing a Successful Neighborhood Cleanup

Yelena Mitrofanova
Extension Educator

Neighborhood cleanups are usually organized by neighborhood associations. Other community groups who might organize or help with a cleanup include:

- Non-profit organizations
- Schools, Community Colleges and Universities (conservation, environmental, service clubs, etc.)
- Youth groups such as 4-H clubs or Boy/Girl Scouts
- Churches
- Juvenile and adult probation/community service programs
- General public

Here are some helpful tips for organizing a successful neighborhood cleanup event.

Time

You will need time to organize the event. Start planning at least a month or two in advance. Spring is the

Join a Cleanup Near You!

The best way to immediately improve the quality of life in a community is with a litter cleanup or beautification project. When the neighborhood looks better, everyone feels better about living there. These activities also boost neighborhood pride.

A neighborhood cleanup is a great chance to clean-out clutter from your yard or garage. Also, it is a nice opportunity to help your neighbors who may not be able to move heavy stuff around.

names, numbers and other important information. It is recommended you document everything and maintain a cleanup file you can use for references and grant applications.

Research your "cleanup area" to get an idea of the support you will need. Consider making sample maps to coordinate placement of roll-offs, drop sites or

fund Now you are ready to build your "community team" for your neighborhood cleanup.

Building a Team

Remember letters work well, but personal contact is the best way to build your team and secure the needed resources for the job. If you do

not know your neighbors, now is a good time to meet them.

Introduce yourself and tell them what you would like to do. Do not

ask for a commitment — that will come later — just get a feel for the support you have.

There may be groups within your community that regularly organize community projects. Consider partnering with these or other groups, even if they are not in your neighborhood.

Businesses, utilities and local government also take pride in their communities. Ask them to help with this community effort by donating items, gift certificates or money.

Designate an event photographer to assure you have photos for your grant requirements, newsletter articles, annual reports, Web page projects, promotional flyers, etc.

Advertisement/Promotion

Create a promotional flyer to distribute at local businesses. Specify what will be or will not be accepted; provide options for those items. Inform neighborhood members about trash pickup time. Specify the cleanup will occur regardless of the weather. Note: the West "A" and Arnold Heights neighborhood associations have



Trash collected from the East Campus Community Organization Spring Cleanup 2004.

best time to do a cleanup — before grass and weeds have a chance to hide trash and make retrieval more difficult.

When you select a day for the cleanup, check with volunteer organizations in your area to avoid any conflicts your volunteers may have. Reserve your roll-offs or hauler for your selected date.

A Good Plan

A good plan will help your group set a direction and document the steps you need to take to organize the neighborhood cleanup. Forming a neighborhood cleanup committee is a great way to get things done efficiently and build ownership at the same time.

Before you start, buy a small notebook and label it "Cleanup Book" to record

pickup routes. Make notes on the amount and types of trash, any situations needing special tools/equipment or consultations, a rough estimate of the number of volunteers, names of neighboring businesses and homeowners, etc.

Some of the typical cleanup needs include:

- Volunteers
- Trash bags
- Safety signs
- Refreshments
- Gloves/heavy-duty
- Buckets for sharp objects
- Insect repellent
- Tools (ropes, rakes, shovels, etc.)
- Trees/wildflower/grass seeds
- Safety vests
- First aid supplies
- Communication equipment
- Gift certificates/coupons
- Money for the neighborhood

flyers which can be used as a reference when creating yours — contact them for copies.

Publicize your event in neighborhood newsletters, Web site, community bulletin board and local media. Invite the media to do a story on your cleanup — this will recognize volunteers, donors and sponsors.

Implementation

Before you start, gather everyone together to review safety requirements and restrictions, workday strategies, distribute supplies and to answer questions.

Have a cleanup plan, such as starting at one end of the street and working to the other end or starting at both ends and working towards the middle. Spread volunteers out so they have plenty to do and not waste any time.

Designate a coordinator for the event, who will:

- Register volunteers
- Make sure everyone is aware of safety requirements and areas to avoid.
- Make sure children are assigned adult supervision.
- Answer questions on collection and removal.
- Have brochures and coupons available on how to dispose of items you cannot accept (hazardous waste, tires, batteries, waste oil, etc.).
- Make sure plenty of water, communications equipment and a first aid kit are on-site.
- Know what to do in case of injury or emergency.
- Keep a positive attitude and not let volunteers be overwhelmed; the last thing you want to do is overwork your volunteers; you can always schedule another day.

The Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department has a "Checklist for Cleanups" which can be used to record all required information to obtain grants for future projects. To request this checklist, please, call Harry Heafer at 441-8035.

Post-Event Recognition

Provide lunch/refreshments to all your volunteers after cleanup. You can have a post-cleanup picnic or gathering to let participants share their

Sample Volunteer Registration Form

Name: _____
 Organization: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ Zip: _____
 Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Email: _____
 Cleanup Location: _____ Date: _____

NOTICE

The undersigned, recognizing and assuming all risks of accidents and injury, hereby agrees that the following sponsors and volunteers:

will not be liable or legally responsible for any injury sustained by the participant, or for loss or damage to property owned or in the possession of the participant during, or as a result of, participation in this cleanup project at the above location whether agents, or otherwise.

Signature: _____ Parent/Guardian if signatory is less than 18 years of age
 Witness, Date: _____

Thank you for volunteering!

Sample Volunteer Registration Form

experiences and build new friendships. It is always nice to reward every volunteer with a small token of appreciation or certificate of recognition. Donated T-shirts, soft drinks and food coupons can also be effective incentives.

Take every opportunity to mention the support of your volunteers, especially when talking to the media. You should write thank you letters to key volunteer groups and local businesses/donors. Provide copies of photos for their archives.

Reflect on and record what worked and what did not; so you do not have to reinvent the wheel next year. This information will be essential for new members of the cleanup committee.

This article is based on the information from Lincoln neighborhood cleanup organizers from the following neighborhood associations:

- Arnold Heights Neighborhood Association
 - West "A" Community Association
 - East Campus Community Organization
 - Witherbee Neighborhood Association
 - University Place Community Organization
- For information on these and other Lincoln neighborhood associations, go to www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/urban/comdev/neighbor/nhcont.htm

Local Resources

Keep Lincoln & Lancaster County Beautiful/Environmental Public Health Division - Harry Heafer, coordinator, 441-8035, Web site www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/health/environ/kilcb

Hazardous Waste Assistance for Households and Businesses, 441-8021

City Public Works and Utilities Department Recycling Hotline, 441-8215

Solid Waste Operations, 441-8102

Yard Waste, Composting and Recycling, 441-7180, Web site lancaster.unl.edu

September Grantsmanship Training

The Grantsmanship Training Program will again be offered to the Lincoln community September 12–16, 2005. The intensive, "hands-on" workshop covers all aspects of researching grants, writing proposals and negotiating with funding sources.

Designed for both novice and advanced grant seekers, the program participants are given follow-up services, including expert grant proposal reviews for a full year following training. To maximize personal attention, the group size for the workshop is limited.

Since 1997, Lancaster County Extension has hosted the Grantsmanship Training Program. Approximately 150 individuals representing various Lincoln and area agencies have participated to date.

For more information and to register, as early as possible, contact The Grantsmanship Center directly at (800) 421-9512 or go to www.tgci.com

Lancaster County Fair Books Now Available



The 2005 Lancaster County Fair will be held Aug. 3–7 at the Lancaster Event Center. The Fair Book has been published — it includes all the information needed to enter an exhibit or participate in a contest. Anyone can enter "Open Class" categories, which include youth divisions (no entry fee for youth).

The Fair Book will be distributed at numerous locations throughout Lincoln and Lancaster County, including the Lancaster Event Center, Lancaster County Extension office, Lincoln City Libraries, grocery stores, and village

banks, post offices and co-ops. It will also be available online at www.lancastereventcenter.com