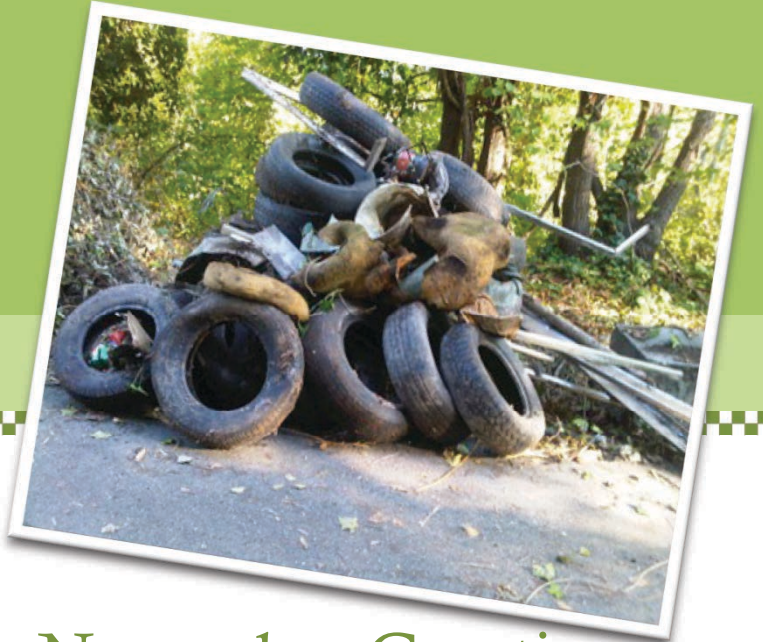


Pacific Northwest Litter Pick-up Project

Green Friends

Maintaining cleanliness and thus safeguarding health are...a duty to our motherland; necessary for a harmonious relation between humanity and nature; and an unavoidable obligation to the coming generation. As far as every human being is concerned, it is his or her personal dharma or duty.

Amma and Amala Bhartham Campaign



November Greetings

On October 18, Ramana (Tony), Tina and I cleaned an area of Seattle's Green Belt where items had been illegally dumped. As we began to carry the items up the embankment we realized there was so much more than we originally thought. This dump had probably been there for years and the items were deeply embedded into the ground. From the pictures, you can see both what we collected and what the ground looked like afterwards. It was clear to us there was even more plastic and trash buried beneath the surface of the Earth.

Trash, especially plastic, seems to go on and on. But every time we make the effort to pick up litter in one form or another, we contribute to solving the problem. I hope that the area of the Earth we cleaned on that day can breathe at least a little better because of our work.

Karuna



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Green Friends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

Green Friends is one of the projects of Embracing the World, a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma).

Interesting Litter!

Early on, a project member suggested that members submit pictures of interesting litter they found. We have our first two submissions!

While collecting litter on an arterial in Duvall, Karuna came upon this "litter". The road was no where near a body of water so it was quite a surprise.



The next day, on the same road, Joann found a different kind of interesting litter. This mailbox was so buried in brush it was hard to see. When touched, the mail fell apart like sawdust. And the mailbox was full of ants!



Litter Project Membership

As of October 31, 2011:

137 members !

October 2011

Litter Project Hours

64 Members plus 15 Guests reported picking up
115.13 hours of litter during October

Average : 1.8 hours

Range 2 minutes to 26.5 hours

Median : 1 hour

The group has picked up 625.7 hours of litter since
the project began in July!

Aluminum Can Report

October 2011 - Seattle Members Collected :

84 lbs of Aluminum Cans = \$38.30

Since July, we have donated \$119 to :

PNW Amma Center Fund

Information about the Litter Project

<http://amma.org/humanitarian-activities/get-involved/seattle-cleanup.html>

<http://seattlesatsang.amma.org/litterproject.html>.

The Seattle Satsang Litter webpage has links to the issues
of past Newsletters.

Nirupama Tran Thanh was asked to translate some of our
project information into French!

Stories & Reflections



From Divya in Bellingham:

I must confess that I have been a closet litter- picker with an attitude, for a long time. With Karuna's encouragement I have 'come out' and everything has changed! You see, I used to pick up the litter and think to myself: 'oh, these trashy people, when will they ever learn?' By judging 'them' my ego could feel superior for a while. As you know, that is what it lives for...

Now that this activity has become 'official', even in God's name, my experience has shifted dramatically. These days, when I come across trash, I am delighted that I have been entrusted to pick it up. The other day I found around 50 cigarette butts by the side of the road. Someone had dumped their car ash tray of the window. I had just read somewhere that it takes nature many years to break down the toxic chemicals in cigarette filters. My reaction was like one who had found a real treasure. I picked them all up ceremoniously and thanked God for the opportunity.

What is the good of picking up trash, if I am polluting the atmosphere with my judgments? I am completely reformed and I have become a happy litter-picker without the attitude. Thanks everyone!

From Vicky in Bellevue:

From reading the October Amrita e-news in my mailbox, I jumped to the Seattle Satsang page, and saw the litter patrol project. A good social marketing success story for you all !

From Aditi in Iowa:

I'm still surprised at the litter concentrated around any convenience store - for blocks and blocks around.



From Nirmala in Seattle:

When I was in Paris last week I logged about ½ hour one day picking up trash in the Louvre! The grounds and gardens were expansive. There were receptacles for trash, however, most of the trash was in public walkways and Parisians in general do not seem to care much about it. My friend David and I picked up trash and helped fill one trash receptacle. It was the inspiration of all that I've read about the NW Litter Crew that inspires me to pick up trash whenever I see it now.

From Stanley del Mundo in Seattle:

I did my first conscious walk for the Litter Team this morning...25 minutes and a bag and a half of litter...most of it was on the Hanford Steps.... however as an aside on 25th & Della I waived a truck to go ahead of me and I heard him run over something metal....sooooo I walked to the middle of the street and found still intact and usable.... a measure stick for my oil tank..... and the clincher is that I was going to try and buy one of those today..... blessings blessings.



More Stories...

From Achala in Olympia:

A man has been coming by our house, behind in the alleyway, to go through our recycling bin looking for cans for the past year and a half. My roommates wanted not to have anyone looking through the bins and were thinking of putting them in the garage. I suggested doing what they do in Mexico, which is to put them in a bag and leave them by their bins. His name is John, and he looks like Santa Claus. He collects for something to do in his later years and keep fit. He told me recently that he can take cat food cans, for they too are aluminum.



From Karuna in Seattle:

So many people express their appreciation as I clean up litter. Today a middle age black man came towards me on a bicycle. "I've been meaning to ask you. Do you do this as a volunteer..... because you want to?" I said yes I do, and I also do it because my spiritual teacher is cleaning up India and if she can clean up India then I thought I could do a lot more here. "God bless your heart" he said as he pedaled off!

Another man said "Thanks for doing that. May I put my garbage in your bag!"

Last week when Theresa and I were working in the International District an elderly Asian woman came up to me and said, "That is hard work. May God bless you and keep you healthy." "That is hard work." she repeated.

CIGARETTE BUTT WORK PARTY

Sunday November 13 at 11 a.m.

Location to be announced

We have a very exciting opportunity !

King County Tobacco Prevention program has offered \$750 grants for non-profit groups to create work parties for the purpose of picking up cigarette butts in particular parks. Participating groups have to work 2- 4 hours.

Swami Dayamrita gave immediate approval to apply for the grant and King County does not anticipate problems in getting our grant approved prior to November 13.

The \$750 will go to the Pacific NW Amma Center fund.

A Trillion Little Pieces of Litter...

It is estimated that several trillion cigarette butts are littered worldwide every year. That's billions of cigarettes flicked, one at a time, on our sidewalks, beaches, nature trails, gardens, and other public places every single day. In fact, cigarettes are the most littered item in America and the world. Cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate tow, NOT COTTON, and they can take decades to degrade. Not only does cigarette litter ruin even the most picturesque setting, but the toxic residue in cigarette filters is damaging to the environment, and littered butts cause numerous fires every year, some of them fatal.

<http://www.cigarettelitter.org>

Please help !!!

Write karunap108@comcast.net to sign up

Starting the Next Phase ?



Problems We've Witnessed

Local city workers blow leaves and litter off the street and onto grass on the other side of sidewalks.

Business owners blow leaves out of their parking lots into the street, which then plug up storm drains leading to flooding when it rains.

People use riding lawn mowers without picking up the trash. The trash is then shredded into tiny pieces, contaminating the earth.

County workers use blowers to blow trash and leaves out of bus shelters and onto city sidewalks.

Fast food restaurants may do a good job of keeping their own grounds clean but the area for blocks around them are full of litter that originated from their businesses.

Email problems you see as you clean up litter to :

karunap108@comcast.net. and better yet, send ideas about how to solve them.

Many of you who were involved from the beginning know that the inspiration for this project came through a variety of experiences that occurred while I was walking and reading the archana (Sri Lalitasahasranama- 1000 Names of the Divine Mother).

This week another amazing thing happened while I was walking and chanting the archana. About ten minutes from my house as I was crossing a street, a man was coming the other way. "You are reading while you walk?" he said incredulously. "I'm reading a chant." I responded. He asked what I was chanting. As I took a moment to decide how to respond, he looked from across the street at the book I was holding and said "Oh, you are chanting the Sri Lalitasahasranama. I get up at 4 a.m. every morning and write [part of it] it in Sanksrit !"

Needless to say I was astounded at the synchronicity. I found out that his name was Stanley del Mundo and that he has been with Amma before, is good friends with a devotee that used to live in Seattle, and has recently opened a spiritual center in his home. He lives just a few blocks from my house. Within the week he wrote to tell me of 8 family members and friends who want to join our project! He will be responsible for collecting and reporting their hours.

During that same time I realized that there is so much work to do in the Beacon Hill and Rainier Valley. It seemed right for me to invite more of my neighbors so I sent out a neighborhood email. Several responded immediately. There are now 10 people in my neighborhood who have joined the project.

As I reflect on these recent events, I recall the "direction" that came on Day 4 of the experiences that led to this project. I wrote this description at the time:

"As I did the walking archana I saw litter everywhere I walked. I thought maybe we could get 108 people to make an ongoing commitment to clean up litter and record their times so we could come up with a total next June and share the project with Amma. Internally the response was "108? Why not 1008?"

It seems like we are starting a second phase, reaching 1008. That goal will probably take considerably longer to reach, but think of the impact it could have on the planet. It is too soon to approach organizations but look for opportunities to invite like-minded people to join us!

Please write me at karunap108@comcast.net :

1. You want to join the project
2. You have a story or reflections to share.
(I may use them in the newsletters. I will assume that is okay unless you ask me to keep your email confidential. I may shorten them or make small edits.)
3. You have any other reason to want to write me!

In Amma's Service,
Karuna