

Pacific Northwest Litter Pick-up Green Friends

Nature on its own is indeed beautiful and clean. The hills and rivers do not need us to clean them. In fact it is nature's water which cleans us; it is trees which purify air for us. Because we have littered, we have spoilt its pristine beauty.

Amma



September Greetings

When I first saw the picture of Eswar above, my thought was that he was the perfect "poster boy" for our project. What an ideal image it is for the first page of this month's newsletter! The picture to the left of this column shows the beach Vandya and he were cleaning at the time. They certainly had their work cut out for them!

I think there were more litter work parties this month than we have ever had. In addition to Eswar and Vandya's clean up, there were work parties in Eugene and Seattle. Details and pictures from all three projects are in this newsletter. And of course there are stories from all over the region.

Enjoy!

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)

To join the Pacific Northwest Green Friends Litter Project write Karuna at
pnwgreenfriendslitterproject@gmail.com

Interesting Reading

From Ajayya in Olympia:

Which Materials Are Greenest?

Compare the environmental impact of materials used in apparel and footwear on four key measures.

<http://www.stumbleupon.com/to/s/1AsUt9>

Paper Bag Trees

<http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2012/08/paper-bag-trees-by-yuken-teruya/>

100 Trashy Transformations

<http://www.trendhunter.com/slideshow/trashy-transformations#53>

Various people sent me this article about the problem of litter in Seattle parks:

The leader of this park litter pickup group commented that: "We're loving these parks to death."

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nicolebrodeur/2018912676_namesinbold14.html

Litter Project Membership

As of August 31, 2012, we had 272 members.

7 new members joined in August!

("Members" are individuals who signed up for the project or who have participated in work parties.)

Litter Project Hours

In August 2012, 52 members and their guests reported picking up 164.13 hours of litter.

(The statistics below relate to members who report having picked up litter. They do not include those who do not report or who reported 0.)

Members Average: 3.16 hours

Range 5 minutes to 25 hours

Median: 1.92 hour

The group has picked up 2296.26 hours of litter since the project began in July 2012

Aluminum Can Report

Washington State Litter Project members collect and sell aluminum cans gathered from the litter they pick up and from friends, family and colleagues.

In 2011 they sold 323 pounds of aluminum cans for \$151.04.

During July and August 2012 they sold 51 pounds of aluminum for \$21.36 which makes 315 pounds and \$146.83 for 2012 to date.

All funds were donated to the Pacific Northwest M.A. Center.



Stories and Reflections

From Amar in Portland:

I saw two lines of teens in yellow t-shirts running up the street in my neighborhood, picking up trash. They were from <http://www.yei.org/> and were working for TriMet, cleaning up the areas around bus stops.

From Jeff in Seattle:

I looked and I didn't see a single piece of trash at Deception Pass Park. Amazing. We did pack out our trash to give the park trash service a break. Those guys tend to be underfunded.

My friend Gary built a seesaw with driftwood that a couple kids and their parents were on for like an hour. Beyond cleanup...

From Jeannette in Bend, OR:

I picked up 5 large bags of firework garbage in Birch Bay, WA while I was on holiday there. After enjoying an amazing fireworks display, everyone just left, and left everything behind, so my boyfriend and I picked up garbage for hours, along with other like-minded peeps! It was awesome!

From Al in Seattle:

So the stay at home work party was ideal for me. The fact that I was a part of a team working at the same time was highly motivating and to work near my home was also satisfying since I was addressing a clear need.

(Al decided to stay at home and clean up litter at the same time as the latest Seattle work party. If *you* can't attend a work party, consider doing the same!)



From Lin in Bellevue:

I was eating dinner at the kitchen island with both front and back doors open when I heard a crash and terrible flapping in the far corner of the living room. It was a young pileated woodpecker which had flown in the front door and crashed into the big window on the opposite side. I could tell he was young because he didn't have his full red crest yet.

I almost had him eased over toward the back door when he took flight and crashed into the kitchen window. Luckily I was able to throw a towel over him on the kitchen counter, lift him up, and walk him out the front door for a release. Imagine! Such a shy and rare bird ending up in my living room and then in my own hands—a bird I've seen only 4-5 times in the 40 years I've lived here!

Litter Work Parties!



Lake Ozette, Olympic Peninsula (Washington)

Vandya and I spent 3 days on the wilderness beaches out by Lake Ozette, in the Olympic National Park. We used to take our kids out there every summer when they were teenagers and we lived in Olympia. It is such a magical place but we were overwhelmed with the amount of litter on the beaches: styrofoam, plastic water bottles, fishing gear, plastic bags, car tires... It was so sad to see.

Our first evening was spent cleaning a ¼ acre area around our campsite on the beach. You can tell from the pictures how much litter was out there. (See the pictures on the first page of the newsletter as well as the one below.)

I have since talked with the Superintendent of the Park and he shared with me that Federal and State agencies are working in collaboration to make a plan to start dealing with this tragic situation.

The garbage from Japan hasn't really impacted the beaches yet but is supposed to start making an impact this Fall/Winter. We were thinking it would make for a great project to enlist a bunch of devotees to go out and do a clean-up; but the more we thought about it we felt it was more in the realm of the National Guard.

Eswar

River of Love Litter Project Eugene Satsang (Oregon)

On Sunday morning at 9:30, Deepthi, Govind, Kavita & I met and started our litter project at the bridge just outside the entrance to Mt. Pisgah. It was a very warm morning, so we only lasted about an hour and a half, but we collected quite a volume of trash from along the banks of the river, as well as in the area surrounding a nearby parking lot. Everything from cigarette butts to baby diapers, lots of cans & bottles, and even some clothing and a blanket, which we will launder and take to St. Vinny's. We ended the morning by picking big beautiful peaches from the tree in Govind's backyard.

We all love this seva; it feels so good to remove trash from Mother Earth! The tentative plan is to make this a monthly event. We hope others will join us next time! We are still looking into adopting a section of the river for which our satsang would be responsible. I'll keep you posted!

Blessings to all,
In Amma's Service,
Upasana



Work Parties Continued:

Rainier Avenue S. Work Party Seattle, Washington

On August 12, twelve Seattle and Tacoma members of the Pacific Northwest Litter Project joined together to clean up litter in the area where Rainier Avenue South and Martin Luther King Avenue South cross. This was where we started our first work party in July of 2011. It was such a beautiful, warm, sunny day. It was so much fun to be picking up litter together, and it felt good to be wearing safety vests for the first time.

From Nirmala: I enjoyed the "litter party" today, picking up litter along Rainier Ave. So. We wore our new neon green vests which identified us as "official" so it seemed like people who were passing felt more comfortable saying "thank you" or "I really appreciate what you are doing". I also met a new woman who lives in my neighborhood (in North Seattle) and we talked about creating a work party in our end of town. I'm happy that now I have my new litter pick up stick, vest and bag in my car so I can stop any time and do littler pickup....a few minutes here and there can add up and I get to inspire by example!



From Jacqui:

I would say that this time picking up litter was different for me in the sense that the garbage was smaller and more tedious to collect. There were lots of bottle caps, small drug baggies and pieces of paper from the local fast food restaurants. As we progressed, I stumbled upon an area where someone was clearly living. I realized the place that had lots of tissue was someone's bathroom. I felt sad that such an exposed and public area was all the person had. On the upside, the garbage was not as bad as the last time we were there. So maybe we are making progress.

From Asun:

My son Kalyan and I had a great experience at the last litter work party. It was our first time to participate in cleaning streets but it won't be our last. My heart was lighting up when I heard a young fellow passing by and saying thank you for doing it... with a smile in his face. Everyone was doing a super good job with each other, and as a team it made the process so easy and smooth. My 5 year old son didn't know what to expect. As soon as he saw Aparna he was so happy to have some other children in the team to share the same purpose. When I asked him what his best experience of the day was, he jumped with joy. "I KNOW, when I found the batteries" he said. We put them in a special bag, not to be mistaken with the rest of the garbage. Back at Karuna's house having some food with people felt extra good, especially for the heart, knowing that we did something together with a purpose. Please count on us for many more parties to come.





20 Minutes to Transform a Beach

This weekend I went camping on Second Beach out by La Push on the Washington coast. Carrying in tent, sleeping bag and food, I looked forward to a lighter pack on the way on the way home. Three glorious nights, with a full moon. Long days, walking on the beach enjoying the low tides and treasures that were revealed in this quiet time and leisurely pace. A magical place. I feel so blessed to live in the Northwest.

When I picked my campsite, I found a great spot. But off to the side, some previous campers had celebrated by smashing glass bottles against a big rock. I thought of when Amma went to pick up every nail some neglectful builders had left dropped in the sand at the Ashram. She told of how one nail could change an entire families livelihood if their father stepped on this forgotten nail. But, she never forgets about us, so she went out to find every stray nail. I imagined the kids at this beach and how a one cut would ruin their vacation. So, bit by bit I carefully picked up pieces of glass putting them in a zip lock bag to carry out.

As I was walking on the beach the next morning, to explore the 7:30am low tide, I was called over by a group of rowdy, fun guys. "Hey, you want some breakfast?" I went over and enjoyed a rich cup of campfire coffee and a two hour conversation about spirituality, reality and ludic dreaming. I also noticed their pile of beer bottles from the night before, so I mentioned the clean-up work I do on these beaches each spring, with the Washington Coast Savers. We talked about taking care of the land, and I think bringing this topic into the conversation helped them look at their trash differently. And they assured me they would pack out their bottles.

The day came for me to pack up and go home. I saw the group camped next to me had been having a party (this is beach is not hard to reach, so bringing in a cooler is not too hard). When I had first arrived, I had wanted to pick up several rusted tins cans and two broken bottles that were there before these campers showed up, but had forgotten to do this. Now, I did not want to leave without taking them. I went over in a friendly way and let them know I had meant to do this earlier and apologized for not having done it before they came. They were friendly and said, "Oh, thanks". A bit surprised, I saw their bottles from the night before, and said, "Should I take these, too. Or have you guys got these? Can you carry them out?" I was ready to take them, too, if they seemed turned off by the idea. But, no, they sparked up and said, "Oh no! We will take it." Then, to "seal the deal" I gave them all the extra fire wood I had gathered, as wood was scarce to find. We left as friends.

How long to pick up the broken glass? 20 minutes.

How long have a friendly chat with two different groups of people about doing clean up? 20 minutes.

How long does it take for you to make a difference in the world? 20 minutes ... or less.

Have a great season!

Jai Ma!

Jovanna Joan Casey