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Keep Troup Beautiful: Green starts with the Great American Cleanup

(March 7, 2011) It's spring cleaning time, and that means the Great American Cleanup can't be far away.

Sponsored annually by Keep Troup Beautiful (KTB), the busy day of community cleanup is set for April 16 in LaGrange and Hogansville and April 23 in West Point. This year's theme is "Green Starts Here."

"Keeping Troup County clean and green is simply a matter of commitment and community-mindedness," said KTB Executive Director Doris Jefferson. "It starts with the individual, and a great time to start is during the Great American Cleanup."

While festivities associated with the annual event occur in April, the Cleanup is already underway and runs through mid-May. Organizations registered with Keep Troup Beautiful are encouraged to tally up the number of bags they've collected and turn in bag counts to KTB by May 15 so that accurate records of participation can be recorded, according to Jefferson.

"But please don't stop thinking about clean roadsides when the Great American Cleanup officially ends," she said. "We have to keep the mission to keep Troup beautiful on our minds all yearlong, and that means everything from collecting trash to preventing it in the first place."

Jefferson joins the Troup County Board of Commissioners in expressing dismay over the amount of litter currently along local roadsides. The Commissioners have scheduled a litter summit on March 31 to address the problem which, according to

Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe, is “pervasive everywhere throughout Troup County.”

“I’ve never seen the roads look so bad,” Jefferson added. “The roads right now are just awful.”

The cause for increased trash is unclear but a weak economy may play a part, said Jefferson, noting that Georgia Department of Transportation work along state highways has decreased significantly over the past two years due to budget constraints. Portions of Roanoke, Hamilton and Hogansville roads—all state highways—are among the County’s most littered, according to Jefferson.

Keep Troup Beautiful, which recently moved its offices to 333 Main Street, next door to the Habitat Re-Store, works throughout the year to combat litter through education and by organizing groups to collect litter. The nonprofit agency with a volunteer board of directors makes available to schools and clubs various teaching tools, including resource materials to educate children about the harmful effects of litter. For any group or individual planning to pick up trash for the Great American Cleanup, or any time of year, Keep Troup Beautiful provides ample resources, according to Jefferson.

“You just work and work and hope you can get through to a few people who will have a mind change and see that it’s beneficial to them to keep their area clean,” said Jefferson. “The kids play a big role in this because they can influence their parents.”

Keep Troup Beautiful invites children and youth of all ages to take part and to encourage their parents to participate in the Great American Cleanup. Organizations wanting to get involved early are urged to become Pacesetters, groups that lead the way by taking on special projects prior to the community gathering in April. T-shirts will be given to the first 200 volunteers who register by March 28 for the Cleanup. Posters created by area school students will be utilized to promote the event.

On the morning of April 16, litter collected by volunteers will be brought to LaGrange and Hogansville where closing ceremonies are scheduled. At the Chamber of Commerce plaza in downtown LaGrange, the Brown Trasher, Keep Georgia Beautiful’s mascot, will be on hand to greet children and the KTB recycling trailer will be parked nearby. A Community Awareness Fair at the plaza will feature local organizations devoted to recycling and litter prevention. A bin for recycling electronics will be

available and the City of LaGrange and Troup County governments will conduct “tire amnesties.”

For the third year, Troup County commissioners will challenge city council members of LaGrange, Hogansville and West Point to gather the most trash at the Great American Cleanup. Troup Commissioners have won the challenge each year but view the battle as far from over.

“When somebody drives through Troup County and see the roadsides littered everywhere, that says something about a community that’s not very becoming of that community,” said Commissioner Ken Smith. As he’s done the past two years, and consistently does throughout each year, Smith plans to pick up trash in April.

To sign up as a Pacesetter, pre-register for the Great American Cleanup, or reserve a table for the Community Awareness Fair on April 16, call Keep Troup Beautiful, 706-884-9922, or pick up registration forms at their offices at 333 Main Street.