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Local groups set pace for Great American Cleanup

(March 26, 2010) Area organizations are setting the pace by cleaning and sprucing up locations in need of a little tender loving care leading up to the April 17 Great American Cleanup.

Among the organizations signed on as Pacesetters for Keep Troup Beautiful's annual cleanup are the Hillside neighborhood, Troup County Board of Realtors, Hollis Hand Elementary School, ExxonMobil and Kids for the Community.

As pacesetters, members of the Hillside community have started weekly walks with the dual goal of getting to know neighbors while picking up litter.

"Hillside is looking at a holistic approach to keeping our neighborhood clean," said Ben Wheeler, Hillside resident and DASH for LaGrange volunteer who credits Hillside resident Rachel Heard with the idea for weekly walks. "The walk helps neighbors meet neighbors, clean up trash and assess community needs, like clearing fallen limbs or repairing potholes. The best part, it's not a one-time event but for the long term. I think the results are going to be far reaching."

During the week of April 10-17, Hillside residents will partner with New Community Church for a neighborhood spring cleaning in connection with the Great American Cleanup. Residents will pick up trash, plant flowers and gardens, pressure wash houses and perform other beautification tasks. Neighbors plan to add another community garden near Hillside Cottages, and the week's work will culminate with a barbecue cookout and celebration on April 18 with entertainment and children's games.



Hillside residents take weekly walks through their neighborhood, getting to know each other while picking up litter to beautify their surroundings. The Hillside neighborhood is a pacesetter for this year's Great American Cleanup.

In the meantime, participants at Hillside Neighborhood Watch meetings discuss various ways to keep their community clean, including teaching neighborhood children to be good stewards. The community has requested the City of LaGrange place trashcans at several corner school bus stops to keep these highly littered areas cleaner.

“People should take pride in the place that they live,” said Hillside resident Katie Baughman. “Litter sends a signal to residents and visitors alike that this is a place no one cares about. Seeing litter implies that it’s okay to litter while less litter actually results in less littering.”

Also at Hillside, the Troup County Board of Realtors plans its pacesetter project at the triangle at Dallis and Lincoln Street in front of Katie’s restaurant. The group will plant flowers with seeds donated by Keep Troup Beautiful and maintain the area.

“We felt like it was important for us to do something for the community to help clean and beautify it,” said board member Angie Cotton. In recent years, the Realtors planted hydrangeas at Lafayette Square.

Hollis Hand Elementary School plans to set the pace by collecting used tennis shoes for the Nike Reuse-a-Shoe program, which recycles shoe soles for use in creating athletic surfaces, such as tennis courts, according to Renee Swanson, coordinator of

Hollis Hand's Recycling Club. Initiated last year with 15 members, the club now has 65 members who lead Hollis Hand's efforts to recycle paper, plastic and aluminum.

"The kids love it," said Swanson, noting that the club provides parents a format for devising a family recycling plan. "We'll have an awareness booth at the Great American Cleanup to promote recycling and to show other schools how easy it is to set up a recycling club. And we'll be accepting any worn tennis shoes, no matter how old, muddy or yucky."

Recycling Club members and parents will pick up litter on April 17, she added.

"If people would just pick up in front of their own homes that alone would make a world of difference," said Doris Jefferson, executive director of Keep Troup Beautiful.

"Neighborhoods can partner with organizations like Keep Troup Beautiful as well as with the local government to make their community the vibrant, safe, and welcoming place they want it to be," said Baughman.

For more information or to register for the Great American Cleanup, call Keep Troup Beautiful at 706-884-9922 or 706-883-8215 or email the executive director at djefferson@asginfo.net. Registration forms may be downloaded from the KTB Web site at www.keeptroupbeautiful.com or picked up at KTB offices at 251 S.L. White Boulevard, off Callaway Church Road; Troup County Government Center Commissioners Office or Planning Department; and LaGrange Daily News.