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Troup County wins first annual Trash Bash Challenge

(April 20, 2009) The Troup County Board of Commissioners claimed victory at Saturday's Great American Cleanup, sponsored by Keep Troup Beautiful. They collected more trash than the city governments of LaGrange, West Point and Hogansville combined to win the first annual Troup County Trash Bash Challenge.

Troup County Commissioners pose with Buster the Brown Trasher, Georgia's anti-litter campaign mascot. Commissioners are, from left, Buck Davis, Morris Jones, Ricky Wolfe, Ken Smith and Richard English.

Challenging the three cities was Troup County's way of helping Keep Troup Beautiful (KTB) promote the annual day of community cleanup. The efforts paid off, said KTB Chairman Bob Wiggins at closing ceremonies after the bags of trash were counted.

"This is the greatest turnout we've ever had," Wiggins said.

Almost 1,000 citizens from throughout Troup County joined forces to bring in approximately 6,100 pounds of trash, according to KTB Executive Director Doris Jefferson who praised the County Commission's involvement.

"I am happy, I am elated, I am very excited," she said. "I just want to say thank you to the county for being so supportive."

Each of Troup County's five commissioners spent Saturday morning bagging trash along county roadsides and creek shores. They met back at Lafayette Plaza for closing ceremonies and to assess the trash their team had collected, which included bags in two county trucks filled to the brim with roadside litter picked up by county inmates the week prior to Saturday's Cleanup.

Troup County won the first annual Troup Trash Bash Challenge. Pitching in their final bags are commissioners and county employees, from left, Morris Jones, Kenneth Hardy (behind Jones), Ken Smith, Ricky Wolfe, Richard English, Buck Davis, Stuart Mills and Dexter Wells.

Troup County Correctional Institute Warden Dexter Wells estimated the inmates' contribution at about 1,000 bags of trash, the average his nine trash crews (eight inmates per crew) collect along county roads each week.

"I was actually surprised to see how much one week's worth is when it's all piled together," said Wells, noting that inmates typically dump bags at compactor collection sites throughout the day. Upon a request from County Manager Mike Dobbs, Wells kept last week's trash on the truck to show how much is routinely collected on a weekly basis.

"This gives you a good visual aid of how much garbage is thrown out in the county everyday and how much we have to pick up on any given week," Wells said. "The garbage in

these trucks came off just a few roads; we can't get to every road every week. It tells you how much garbage is out there."

At an average of 1,000 bags per week, county inmates pick up approximately 52,000 bags of trash per year. Estimating each bag at about 20 pounds, that totals just over 1 million pounds, or 520 tons, of garbage thrown out along county roadsides annually.

"We're better than this," said Commission Chairman Ricky Wolfe. "With all the blessings we enjoy in Troup County, it's a shame our roadsides are littered."

The Commissioners and their teammates (which included the 72 inmates who picked up trash last week) brought in 1,051 bags of trash. Even without counting the Correctional Institute's contribution, the Troup Commissioners bested the cities efforts with 51 bags of trash compared to West Point's 23 bags and Hogansville's 22 bags. The City of LaGrange did not submit a report of trash collected.

Commissioner Ken Smith accepted a plaque from Wiggins and Jefferson honoring Troup County as winners of the Trash Bash Challenge. Jefferson also presented Smith, on behalf of the commissioners, with a "trash torch" crafted from aluminum cans and plastic bags. The torch, she said, is to be passed along to next year's Trash Bash winner.

Smith vowed it would remain in the County's possession for years to come.

Keep Troup Beautiful Executive Director Doris Jefferson and Chairman Bob Wiggins present the Trash Bash Torch to Commissioner Ken Smith on behalf of the Commissioners.