



COUNTY of CUMBERLAND

Public Information Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cleanup

We need to raise litter-free kids

The grand totals aren't added yet, but it's a sure thing that this year's North Carolina Big Sweep netted tons of trash - throwaways that belong in the dump, not in our rivers, lakes and meadows.

About 240 volunteers spread out over Cumberland County on Saturday, finding piles of tires, mountains of cans and bottles, and a few surprises as well. There was a wheelchair pulled out of Roses Lake. Part of a washing machine at Hope Mills Lake. A presumed moment of golfer's rage led to a set of clubs, still in the bag, in water near Chesapeake Drive. And an empty safe from Lake Rim.

The cleanup was part of International Coastal Cleanup, which included participants across the nation and from about 100 other countries. The international grand total for last year's cleanup was 8.2 million pounds of rubbish. In North Carolina last year, 15,145 volunteers picked up nearly 574,000 pounds of refuse, the third-highest total in the country. Only Florida and California collected more. The participation rate is impressive, but the amount of illegal waste disposal is positively depressing.

Cumberland County cleanup coordinator Sidney Post suggested to the Observer on Saturday that, "We're going to have to do something to reach them at a younger age. ... We have to teach them that rather than throwing something out the window, we put it on the floorboard until we can appropriately dispose of it."

That's good advice. Much as we'd like to see bigger littering fines and tougher enforcement of the litter laws, we know there are barely enough law-enforcement personnel out there to tackle felonies and the more dangerous lesser crimes. Litter violations aren't going to rise high on the priority list while people are killing each other, pushing drugs, crashing cars, robbing convenience stores and beating their kids.

But we can ask the schools - and especially parents - to work even harder to raise kids who know enough to throw their garbage in the can, not on the streets and into the rivers and lakes. Our kids don't naturally live in their own rubbish. They learn to do it. They learn by example, from people who should know better.

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