How to...

Host a Community Clean-Up

In Advance of the Clean-up

☐ Pick your clean up spot(s). Popular options include:
  a. Public Parks and Trails
  b. Downtown sidewalks and plazas
  c. School grounds
  d. Rivers or lakes
  e. Ditches along roadways

  Be aware of who owns the property you are cleaning up and make sure you have permission to be there. For parks and public spaces, contact City Hall or your City Parks Department.

☐ Pick your date, time and meet-up location
  a. Pick a time where temperatures will be comfortable and you'll have enough daylight.
  b. Set an end time so volunteers know what to expect.
  c. Meet up where there's plenty of room to safely gather and park (not the side of the road).

☐ Gather supplies
  • Gloves are a must for volunteer health and safety!
  • Trash grabbers
  • Trash bags
  • Brightly colored vests or reflective clothing (especially if working along roads)
  • Water and snacks for volunteers
  • Hand sanitizer or access to soap and water
  • Signage – make a yard sign or banner with the name of your organization/event to place on site (so volunteers can find you & passersby know who to thank!)

☐ Make a plan for disposing of trash
  a. Where will the full trash bags go? Coordinate with the local waste management company, or for smaller events, recruit a volunteer with a truck to take bags to a disposal site.

☐ Recruit volunteers/ Publicize
  a. Make a flyer or graphic to post around town and online. Try Canva.com for free templates.
  b. Where to share: City social media pages, community facebook group, library/post office/rec center, church bulletins, school newsletters, ask local nonprofits to share
  c. Tell volunteers what to wear/bring – sturdy shoes, appropriate clothes, water, hat, sunblock, and supplies such as gloves and grabbers (if you are not providing them on site)

☐ Prepare/Sign waivers
  a. Prepare a waiver for volunteers to sign that acknowledges the risks of participating in the activity. Minors need a guardian to sign. Waivers can be signed in advance or at the event.
  b. Sample Waivers: [Adopt A Stream](#) / [Chicago Parks Foundation](#)

On the day of the cleanup

- ☐ Come together, then divide and conquer
- Have everyone meet in a central location to sign waivers, pick up supplies, review safety tips, and receive assignments. Put up a yard sign or banner to help people find the meeting place.
- Making volunteer assignments:
  - o Work in groups - Avoid having people work alone – working in small groups of 2-5 people improves safety and visibility, and is more enjoyable for the volunteers.
  - o Flexibility – Build in flexibility to location assignments so volunteers don't have too much or too little work to do. Identify priority areas to focus on first, and additional areas to cover if time allows.
- Set an end time
- Tell volunteers where they should leave full trash bags when finished

- ☐ Provide safety tips for volunteers
- Litter can contain dangerous objects.
  - o Avoid touching litter directly by wearing gloves and using trash grabbers.
  - o Do not open any sealed containers.
  - o Do not pick up sharp objects, needles, chemical or gas containers, unidentified containers or substances, or anything else that could be harmful. When in doubt, leave it!
- Be cautious along roadways and make sure children are closely supervised if working near roads or water. Assign children to areas away from busy roadways and other hazards.
- Wear proper clothing and sun protection – sturdy shoes, hats, sunscreen. If working in wooded areas, wear bug spray and check for ticks afterward.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and locations when working in natural areas.

- ☐ Show your appreciation
- Provide snacks and water at the end of the clean-up. Bigger events could consider adding entertainment and/or a food truck.
- Thank your volunteers: in person, on your social media, in your newsletter, etc.

- ☐ Share your success
- Take plenty of pictures and share on your social media or newsletters, with the local paper, and with any groups that participated
- Share your pictures with Keep Iowa Beautiful!