



Hundreds of NJ Volunteers Participate in World's Largest Riverbank Cleanup

On Saturday, September 19, volunteers in more than 150 locations worldwide cleaned litter and debris from lakes, streams, rivers, bays and beaches – all part of ocean Conservancy's 30th Annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC).



"The NJ Clean Communities Council is proud to support the International Coastal Cleanup in New Jersey for the fifth consecutive year. More than 2,000 volunteers pick up litter from riverbanks and beaches and more than 5,000 volunteers hit beaches through December 31," says NJCCC Executive Director Sandy Huber.

There was a big celebration on the beach in Margate City. Clean Communities Coordinators who completed the summer school classes and submitted the final assignment "graduated" on the beach.

"Volunteers really had to look for trash in Margate because the public works department does such an outstanding job in caring for our beautiful sandy shore," noted Franz Adler, Margate's Clean Communities/Recycling Coordinator.

NJCC Hosts Urban Cleanup Teams

Representatives from Jersey City, Newark, and the New Jersey Department Environmental Protection were among the dozens of attendees at the annual Urban Cleanup Team (UCT) Meeting on September 16 at the Newark Club.



Among the highlights of the fall kick-off program was artist Willie Cole (pictured at left), a Newark native who is known for assembling and transforming ordinary objects into works of art. Cole, a one-time recipient the David C. Driskell Prize, presented on his series of sculptures made from plastic water bottles, underscoring yet another way to recycle.

Also appearing was Patrick Council, Director of Newark's Neighborhood and Recreational Services, who touted the partnership with NJCCC for the annual Slam Dunk the Junk initiative, which assembles students from around the city to help clean debris from parks.

There was also a presentation from local graffiti artists, discussing how works of art can transform neighborhoods and cut down on vandalism. Alyssa Cohen (pictured at right) and other artists with FoxCrow Murals talked about how they are beautifying Newark and Jersey City.



Representatives from Coca-Cola, Covanta, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, ShopRite and the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners were also on hand to provide partnership updates.

"Our work doesn't happen in a vacuum," said NJCCC Executive Director Sandy Huber. "Our work depends on the hard work of our partners and today you're getting a glimpse of how we work together throughout the year."

Volunteer Emelia Oleson is in it for the Long Haul

For nearly 15 years, Emelia Oleson of Cape May Point has been organizing the local cleanup in her town to coincide with the annual International Coastal Cleanup (ICC).



To put it mildly, Oleson (pictured at far left working with volunteers) is a passionate volunteer steward of the environment. But Oleson is anything but mild about her commitment: "We have no choice but to take care of this planet and it's our obligation to clean it up. There's no secret about why it's important, and our volunteers understand that," she said.

In addition to picking up trash and debris, Oleson said, the volunteers record how much has been collected.

The cleanups, which are organized by municipalities and private individuals who are usually local residents, are sponsored by the Ocean Conservancy and included 500,000 volunteers last year.

"This brings attention to the table," Oleson said. "I would love to see zero degree of litter. But since that's never going to happen, we have to continue doing the hard work.

"New Jersey Clean Communities has done a fantastic job making people aware of the fact that these are our beaches and it's our job to take care of them," she added.

To volunteer, visit www.njclean.org or call [609-989-5900](tel:609-989-5900).