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Wood-Ridge Councilman Honored With “Clean Communities Program Award” from New Jersey Clean Communities Council

WOOD-RIDGE – July 31, 2017 –Since 2000, Wood-Ridge Councilman Ezio Altamura has worked to create and maintain a comprehensive cleanup, enforcement and education program on litter for the Borough of Wood-Ridge, earning him the “Clean Communities Program Award” from the New Jersey Clean Communities Council (NJCCC).

Altamura is the creator of “Keep Wood-Ridge Beautiful,” a three-hour cleanup program run annually on the first Sunday of June. This year, more than 140 volunteers from Bergen County and various civic organizations came together to clean the business area of Wood-Ridge.

“Keep Wood-Ridge Beautiful” attracts volunteers of all ages, including local Girl Scouts troops, who planted flowers along roadsides and Knights of Columbus members, who swept Route 17 ramps.

“Keep Wood-Ridge Beautiful” receives generous donations from local businesses. Pizzerias donate 10 pies each to feed participants, church groups send people to assist, and Altamura recognizes each donor at that day’s event for giving back to the community.

“What started as a small group of people, which has blossomed into a larger community program,” the councilman said.

Altamura works with co-chair Councilman Ed Marino and a group of volunteers each year who form a committee to brainstorm new ideas and organize the event. At the end of the event, Altamura and Marino collect litter that volunteers pick up.

In 2000, they used two truckloads to transport the event’s litter. But last year, only 10 bags of trash needed to be disposed, proving that ongoing education and outreach has made a difference.

Altamura has expanded the Clean Communities program to make it more comprehensive in Bergen County.

For the past 10-12 years, the Bergen County Health Department has sent an instructor to teach a litter control program to 2nd graders in the spring. In addition, Altamura asks 7th and 8th grade students to submit artwork inspired by green ideas.

The winning student artist is given a \$50 prize, compliments of the Mayor & Council; his or her work is displayed on the T-shirts given to volunteers at the “Keep Wood-Ridge Beautiful” event.

“It starts locally; every community leader needs to involve their local civic organizations,” said Altamura. “Civic, grassroots organizations can help grow these movements into something bigger.”

NJCCC Executive Director Sandy Huber said: “We are tremendously proud of the work Councilman Altamura is doing every year to pull the Borough of Wood-Ridge community together for a greater cause. He is an ideal example of a public servant who is truly committed to the community he serves.”

NJCCC is a comprehensive, statewide litter-abatement program that has served New Jersey residents and visitors for more than 25 years. Learn more at njclean.org.

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PHOTO CAPTION 8246: Volunteers for the “Keep Wood-Ridge Beautiful” annual event held on June 4th.

PHOTO CAPTION 8263: Girl Scout troops plant flowers along roadsides as part of the “Keep Wood-Bridge Beautiful” event.