

Project: Illegal Dump Site Clean-up Program 2017

October 18, 2017, 51, grade 9 students from Central Colchester Junior High School (CCJHS) travelled to different parts of rural Colchester County to clean up garbage, mostly of the construction type.

The goal of this project was multi-faceted, it mostly created an awareness of how much refuse is not taken to the land fill, and how detrimental it can be to the environment.

We felt change of this behaviour was best instituted through hands on education with youth. Changing the way of life or ideas is a slow process and believe education is the key. Members of the cleanup committee felt students removing these illegal dump sites achieved a deeper understanding and appreciation of a rural environment. We felt having students do this created an awareness to the community and surrounding areas. Having a team effort from Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund, Trappers Association of Nova Scotia (TANS), school administration, students, parents, Tim Hortons, employees of Colchester County waste management and Miller Waste solidified the awareness to the students involved.

This was important for our youth to see these stake holders work for a cleaner environment. The funds that were allocated went to the extensive breakfast program at CCJHS. Every student can go to class with a belly full of nutritional food. There is also snacks provided all day for those who have nothing to eat at home. There are major spin offs in the school community, better concentration, happier students and less discipline problems.

Several times throughout the spring, summer and fall members of the Trappers Association committee spent many part time days identifying types of garbage and recording locations. The key locations were then captured on camera along with GPS locations and land owner names. This was done by special constable JP Wood who works for Colchester Waste Management.

JP was delighted to work with us on this project, "I usually deal with one perpetrator at a time and growth is slow but having 60 people see this and clean it up is progress."

Waste Management staff met with students involved and taught them how to conduct themselves at a waste site and be especially careful handling garbage in bags for fear of sharps. The committee went to each site and with orange paint painted hazardous material; that is glass, nails, propane cylinders and garbage bags. It was critical that the students were very aware of these hazards.

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On October 18, the 51 students were bussed to two locations where refuse was to be collected and placed in dumpsters, which were provided at no cost by Miller Waste. By day's end there were two dumpsters overflowing and another had to be brought in.

*Side Note: When dumpsters were to be delivered there were no local drivers available, Miller Waste brought a driver from Amherst to get the job done. Pizza and drinks were donated by Tim Hortons as were the portable washrooms. This is the type of commitment we saw from the community.

The work that was completed was exceptional and the transformation was astonishing. The directors of TANS, Ross White and Francis Gibbs felt a committee of two for a project of this magnitude was the way to go. We never would have predicted how everyone fell head over heels with this concept. People couldn't do enough. Winners of this project are the students, for cleaning up the environment and for those that have access to nutrition throughout the school day every day.

If the project were to be done again the committee would prefer that two days for the work, one being a Saturday. Students with Cell phones would be a must or have a few social media gurus distributed within the group. When working with Colchester Waste Management, dealing with one person would be beneficial. Also, signs were placed to make the public aware that the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund was responsible for the project.