

Green Friends

Pacific Northwest Litter Pick-up Project

Looking at Nature and observing its selfless way of giving, we can become aware of our own limitations. That will help to develop devotion and self-surrender to God.

Amma



January Greetings

In July 2011, we started this project with 10 members. As of December 31, 2011 we were up to 193 members! (Members include anyone who signed up directly or who participated in one of the work parties.) Our youngest member is 18 months old. If you think you might be our oldest member let me know!

Last month, I realized there was some possibility that we might make it to 1008 hours by the end of the year. It was a stretch, but not out of the question. Well we have surpassed that number considerably. We reached 1070 hours. That's 1070 hours of litter pick up during the first six months of the project!

When I reflect on all that we have experienced in the last six months, I feel inspired and grateful. We are indeed blessed.

Thank you Amma for all that we are learning.

Karuna



Contents

January Greetings
Cigarette Facts and Figures
Litter Project Membership
Litter Project Hours
Cigarette Butt Work Party
Amritapuri Recycling Center
Stories and Reflections

Green Friends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world. Green Friends is one of the projects of Embracing the World, a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma). For more info go to: www.embracingtheworld.org

To join the Pacific Northwest Green Friends Litter Pickup Project write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net. To learn more about the project go to: www.seattlesatsang.amma.org/litterproject.html

CIGARETTE FACTS AND FIGURES

There are 599 additives to cigarettes.
This list can be found at:

<http://quitsmoking.about.com/cs/nicotineinhaler/a/cigingredients.htm>

About.com says: While these ingredients are approved as additives for foods, they were not tested by burning them, and it is the *burning* of many of these substances which changes their properties, often for the worse.

Over 4000 chemical compounds are created by burning a cigarette, many of which are toxic and/or carcinogenic.

Carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrogen cyanide and ammonia are all present in cigarette smoke. Forty-three known carcinogens are in mainstream smoke, sidestream smoke, or both.

More information is available at
<http://www.cigarettelitter.org/index.asp?PageName=Facts>

From their report:

“What happens after that butt gets casually flicked onto the street, nature trail, or beach?

Typically wind and rain carry the cigarette into the water supply, where the toxic chemicals the cigarette filter was designed to trap leak out into aquatic ecosystems, threatening the quality of the water and many aquatic life forms.

Cigarette butts may seem small, but with several trillion butts littered every year, the toxic chemicals add up! “

Litter Project Membership

As of December 31, 2011, we had 193 members.
18 new members in December!

Litter Project Hours

In December, **75** members reported picking up 218.49 hours of litter. (The statistics below relate to members who report having picked up litter. They do not include those who do not report or who reported 0.)

Members Average : 2.9 hours
Range 2 minutes to 30.82 hours
Median : 1.17 hours

The group has picked up 1070 hours of litter since the project began in July 2011!

Words from Amma

Happiness fills Amma's heart at the cleaning work under-taken by my children in a selfless attitude. Amma feels like rushing to you to take you all into Her embrace. Amma hopes that your example sends new vibrations through our country.

Amma, referring to the clean-up campaign in India

From a bulletin board in Amritapuri:

Love is the foundation of the world.

Where there is love, there is peace.

Where there is selfishness, there is misery and suffering.

Learn from Mother Nature who gives
of Herself even when exploited.

Do good and see everyone as Mother's child.

Amma

Messages from Amma (2004)

Another Cigarette Butt Work Party!



On December 13, Caroline Hughes from the King County Tobacco Prevention program contacted me and asked if we would be willing to clean a Woodinville Park. Since I was in India, I asked Jyotsna if she would organize it and she agreed to do so. She enlisted Maheswari and Lin and they began to prepare.

We were asked to do the second park because we did such a good job last time. During that first work party we found more than three times the number of butts than the other groups who had received the grant. The Woodinville Park Commissioner believed that no one smoked in their parks. Caroline thought if anyone could find butts, it would be us.

The work party was held on Sunday December 18, five days after we received the invitation! When they arrived at the park an employee told them he had just picked up 500 butts. Twenty of our group participated in this work party. They picked up 902 butts!



Email from Swami Ramakrishna in India:

I am happy that our seva is recognized and is also encouraged. Keep it up and my congratulations to the participating members.

Report from Nirmala in Seattle:

I enjoyed being part of the litter cleanup team in Woodinville last weekend. There was less than a week's notice for this event and still so many people came.

It is different to meet with satsang brothers and sisters for a cause which affects so many people whom we may

never see or get to know. As I was picking up litter along the edge of the park which bordered the street, I was wondering how many people who drive by here every day would notice the difference.

After our clean up, the area was free of litter. Even though we were assigned the job of picking up cigarette butts and related items, we made the extra effort to clear the area of other unsightly trash.

I felt so satisfied and happy after doing this seva to clean and protect Mother Earth.

Amritapuri Recycling Center



Since I've been in India, I have had the privilege of picking up litter near the ashram and taking it through the recycling process that is used here nearly every day. At some point or another I was joined by Sri Lalitha, Ramana, Anagha and her husband Raj.

Being here has certainly given me an awareness of the sloppy job I do when I recycle at home, and also how many recyclable items I'm throwing into trash when I pick up litter. At the ashram every bucket of food waste is checked to be sure there is no paper or plastic in it. Every tiny piece of plastic is separated from paper. Everything is cleaned (if need be) prior to being recycled. Little goes into the burnable trash can, almost everything is seen as potentially usable or recyclable.

In this section of the newsletter, I will give you a brief tour of the Amritapuri Recycling Center which is becoming a model for all of India. I think we can all learn from and be inspired by their work.

Residents and visitors sort their garbage into various bins. Paper goes in the blue bin, soft plastic in the orange, hard items in the red, food in the small blue container and yard waste in the green.



Small trucks pick up the bins from all over the ashram grounds and bring them to the recycling center. There are about 3000 residents, 1400 western visitors plus many thousands of Indian visitors at the ashram now, so there is lots of trash.



The bins are picked up once a day and brought to the recycling center.

Since residents and visitors often put their trash in the wrong bins, everything must be resorted once it reaches the recycling center. Dirty items must be thoroughly washed.



The next step is to do a more precise sort. If you enlarge the pictures you will see many of the categories they include in their sorting. Even very tiny pieces of paper are divided into five different categories.



Items are then sent to places in India that have experience in selling recycled materials. Most items are sent to AIMS in Kochi and to Tamil Nadu.



Valuable items are separated out from the general recycling. Valuable is anything that can be reused.

Stories and Reflections

From Janani in India:

Amma asked me to interview some of the Amrita University students who are actively involved in the ABC (clean up India!) project. The ones I talked with were so enthusiastic; I hated to put any sort of damper on their moods. Yet, I had to ask:

"Have you ever returned to a place a week or so after you cleaned it?"

"Yes," said a bright-eyed second-year engineering student.

"How was the place--still clean?" I continued.

"Oh, no," she replied. "There were cigarette butts, candy wrappers, plastic bags--just about the same as before."

"How'd you feel?" I asked. "Discouraged? Maybe people just won't change," I prompted.

"No, I wasn't at all discouraged," she smiled. "I thought about how it is when I study for an exam. How many times do I repeat the facts before they stick?"

From Anonymous Seattle Member:

(After reading this email, I realized how little we know about each other's history and also that some members have been doing this kind of work for many years. KP)

[I have a friend] in town and we have made previous plans...but I am a good litter picker-upper.

Do you know I ran road crews in the early 80's picking up litter on the side of freeways for the department of ecology? I loved the things we found at the side of the road...and did I tell you I helped start the first recycling program at my high school in the 70's?

I'll participate next time.

From Svaha in Seattle:

Kali Devi (age 18 months) picked up her first piece of garbage the other day; one piece and held it till we got to the garbage and put it in the garbage.

From Kalavati in Seattle

Just letting you know I picked up litter for about 30 minutes last month. Since I just kind of do it when I am going for a walk, without having it be a specific activity, I thought I wouldn't bother letting you know. However, seeing that you have a specific goal to reach, I thought I should let you know. The 30 minute estimate comes from time I am actually holding garbage and carrying it to a can, and it's approximate, but near correct anyway. Best wishes.

From Kat in Bellevue/Richland:

In Tri Cities, no recycling exists for apartments & condos. There is a big recycle center in town where Kerry & I take ours & sort. We are never alone, there are usually several other people doing the same thing.

When we were sorting our recycling last night, I was thinking that there is a sense of community in taking your stuff to a center & sorting w/your neighbors. Most of the time there are kids w/parents learning to sort. Younger kids think it's cool to go & look forward to 'recycle day'.

It's interesting here, there are not nearly as many services provided by the city in Richland as there are in Bellevue. The result is that more people chip in to get things done or just do it themselves.

From Al in Seattle

Spent 40 minutes at 3 trees (145 cigarette butts) can't believe I [once] was a part of that! Anyway I bet it would be a great way to get someone to quit!