

*Look at the beauty and perfection in Nature. Everything in Nature is so joyful.
Amma*

Litter Project Newsletter #3 October 9, 2011

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Litter project membership

As the first week of October ends, we are up to 120 members! They include both satsang members and their friends. Locations: Seattle area (64) Tacoma (6) Olympia (2) Olympic Peninsula (12) Vashon (3) Bellevue (4) Bellingham (4) Vancouver (3) Vancouver Island (1) Victoria (1) Cortes Island (4) Nelson (3) Eugene (7) Portland(2) Neskowin (1) Iowa (1) Indiana (2)

Litter project hours

Ten people picked up litter in July for a total of 100 hours (Average 7.25 hours; Range 1 to 72.5 hours; Median 1.25 hours). In August 46 people reported a total of 212 * hours! (Average 4.5 hours; Range 15 minutes to 40 hours; Median 1 hour) By October 5 sixty-six people had reported 197 hours for September (Average 3 hours; Range 3 minutes to 33 2/3 hours; Median 1 1/2 hours). The group has picked up 509 hours of litter since the project began in July!

*This number is different than the last newsletter report because people have continued to turn in August hours!

Aluminum Can Sales

Seattle devotees are saving the aluminum cans they find as litter, plus those they can get from work, neighbors and friends. We are selling them to benefit the Pacific Northwest Amma Center. Here is an update on that project.

In July we earned \$2.20. In August the total was \$31.63. Our September total is \$47.37. That means we have donated \$81.20 to the Pacific NW Amma Center.

NOTE: WE CAN SELL THE SMALL LIGHTWEIGHT CANS OF CAT FOOD AS WELL AS SODA, JUICE AND BEER CANS. THEY ARE ALSO MADE OF ALUMINUM. WE ARE ALSO SAVING **CAPRISUN JUICE PACKETS**.

Questions and Answers

How do I count my hours when I pick up litter when taking a walk or walking my dog?

Several people have asked me this question and it is a tough one to answer. The best I could come up with is: "A litter pick up walk is when you take a walk and are intentionally looking for litter to pick up as opposed to taking a pleasure walk and picking up litter only if it happens to catch your eye." It seems to me that in the first instance all of the time would be all counted and in the second only a portion. If anyone can think of a better answer let me know!

What tools are available to help me pick up trash?

There are a variety of tools that can be helpful. If you have a bad back or knees, or if you pick up a lot of litter or if you are picking it out of blackberry vines or bushes you may want to get a litter grabber. They come in 32 and 26 inch sizes. You can order them at <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000FI2IHK?Submit3=Find+Best+Price+Now> or if you live in the Seattle area I can order one for you as part of a group order. In a group order they end up being about \$13.

Achala and I both have found it helpful to have hands free when picking up litter. What I do is use two tarp clips strung on a piece of clothesline tied around my waist. I get the clips at Home Depot. Then I clip on one bag for trash and one for recyclables.

I also made reusable bags that can be easily washed. They are also fairly water resistant, meaning they don't leak unless they are really soaked.

If you don't want to make your own I will provide the hands free set (clothesline and 2 clips) for \$5 (plus postage). I will also sell the handmade bags for \$10 each (plus postage). Write karunap108@comcast.net if you want to order them. Any profits will go to the Pacific Northwest Amma Center.

How do I report hours for people who clean up litter with me?

If someone cleans with you ask if they want to join the project. If they do, then send me their name and email address. If they don't want to join, then you track their hours and report them to me as a "Guest". No names are needed, we will just have a broad "Guest" category that covers all guests.

Helping and getting help from government and private businesses

1. You may see things while you are picking up litter that it is worth reporting. Illegal dumping in Seattle can be reported via email:
<http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Garbage/KeepSeattleClean/ReportIllegalDumping/>

2. A Metro employee put the trash liners in the garbage cans in the bus shelters on Rainier and Martin Luther King upside down for about three weeks. That meant almost no trash could be put into the cans. When I finally found the correct department to report it to they discovered he did it because he was angry people were putting their home trash into the garbage cans. They let me know he wouldn't do it anymore.
3. I wrote letters to a Lowe's store and a church both of which had massive amounts of very gross garbage outside their buildings for an extended time. My letter to Lowe's said that I had picked up a big bag of their litter and then included four pictures that showed how much was left afterwards. I asked them if they would start keeping that area of their building clean. My letter to the church said I picked up litter in their area regularly and requested that they start picking up the litter on the west side of their building. Both of them cleaned their areas shortly thereafter!
4. We can give clothing or household items we find to projects that serve the homeless or places like Goodwill.
5. From Achala: One of the guys that works at Metro Parks and takes care of Ruston Way told me that he and his boss have started recycling!!!! I had been leaving them bags of recycling by the trash and he told me that because i did this they wanted to start collecting recyclables as well!!! The \$ will go to do something for Metro Parks in Olympia! Let's pray its recycling bins for the public to use!

Amma's Birthday Seattle Litter work party

Seattle held its first litter work party on Saturday September 24, three days before Amma's birthday. Eighteen people participated in one form or another. We had a lot of fun and many are looking forward to the next time!

Click the link to see more pictures from the event:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/karunapoole/SeattleWorkParty92611?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

Our next work party is scheduled for **Saturday October 22 10:30 a.m. to noon. Everyone is welcome to participate!!!**
To sign up write karunap108@comcast.net

Litter Song

One of the highlights of the Seattle work party is that Mike Hersey taught us the litter song he wrote for the project during the potluck that followed the litter clean up. We will share it via youtube once we have the link.

Litter Pickup T-shirt

Those of you who have been members for a while know that Mechas has been working on t-shirt designs for us and that this past month we voted on the design.

You can go to to see the t-shirt designs that were chosen. The front was chosen by 75% of the people who voted. The vote for the back design was evenly split between this design and the one that had "Green Friends Pick Up Litter" in script writing. When I went to San Ramon for Amma's birthday celebrations, I showed the designs to Kannan (Amma Shop manager) in hopes that there might be a chance that MA Center would produce the t-shirts. He was very interested and said that if his team agreed, they would definitely include it as one of the two new designs they produce next year! He said the script design would not sel, so they will use the one shown here. He said his team will probably also use a shorter Amma quote. An advantage of this design versus the other one is that it will make us more visible when working, an important factor when we are picking up litter near roads.

The fact that they accepted the design means that they will take the responsibility for doing the work and also financing the production!!!!

Lessons from Litter booklet and coloring book

I've starting putting together a booklet of the lessons that litter has taught members of this project. Lin and Maheswari are going to help with the editing and Mechas is going to work on the graphics. Please send me your "lesson" stories as they occur!

We will also make a simplified version for children in the form of a coloring book. Marmot and Shirley have agreed to work on the graphics and several others aer working on the content. If you have suggestions for content or title let me know!

NW Plastic Weaving Project is Back!

From Neeraja:

Beginning this October, I will be holding meeting/classes, monthly, at the Keystone Center for the Arts in Anacortes Washington. All NW satsang members and their friends are welcome to participate in making beautiful woven objects out of 'trash'. Items will be sold on Amma's US tour and will benefit her humanitarian projects. We may also be doing fundraising activities for our NW Center! If your satsang, or a representative from your satsang, or any individual satsang member is interested in participating in this project please email me at maneeraja1@yahoo.com or call 360.293.3761.

You can see woven items we made in 2008 at:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/karunapoole/PlasticProjectWeaving?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

Crocheting Plastic Project is starting again also!

A few months ago, Swami Dayamrita asked that we start the Plastic Project again. That original project included both weaving and crocheting crafts made from plastic trash. If you are willing to crochet using plastic "yarn", known as plarn, please let me know. You can see crocheted items we made in 2008 at:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/karunapoole/PlasticProjectCrocheted?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

Reflections and Stories from Project members:

From Achala:

I see others who are also picking up litter. We give each other encouragement and share stories. One woman's name is Cathy. She is about 70 years old. We met yesterday and we walked, talked and collected trash together. She said "We live in paradise and we need to take care of it". My response "Yes, Cathy, we do". She said "the more of us that are out here doing this the more normal it will be and more people will be doing it, and less people littering". My response "Yes, Cathy, I believe that too"

From Karuna:

One day at the beginning of my litter walk, as I turned the corner of my block, I ran into a neighbor. He is a young man in his 30's who was a friend of my children when they were young. He and his nephew are now taking care of his aged aunt's house. He was surprised to see me and said he had just been thinking of me. He told me that the day before a neighbor's boyfriend had thrown garbage out of his car window onto the street. The nephew walked up to him and said "the woman across the street spends a lot of time every day picking up garbage" and asked him to stop. Then my kids friend said later that day he himself had approached the girlfriend and commented "there are numerous people working really hard to make this a clean neighborhood" and asked her to ask her boyfriend to stop littering. There is no way to know if those contacts made a difference in the boyfriend's behavior but it did indicate to me that our work is having impact. I don't believe either of those young men would have had so much consciousness about litter several months ago, (neither did I for that matter). Lesson: Our actions make a difference.

From Al:

Since I joined this project I see litter everywhere!

From Tony:

One thing that's been fun to notice is peoples' perceptions of us as we go about our work. It hadn't occurred to me when I began the seva, but think about it; what are your presumptions as to the identity of the work parties you see off the highways, with their reflective vests, picking up trash? Anyone? Here's mine: correction system (aka prison) inmates, that's who!

So while we are regularly met with "thank you's" and smiles from passers-by, there are also quizzical expressions, where you can almost see the gears moving as they struggle to identify us. One passerby looked at a project member, chuckled and said : "Wow; you don't look like an inmate!" Now it puts a smile on my face when I see people looking at us with 'that look' of wonderment. If they ever ask me, I will tell them, "No, I'm not 'out on work-release', I'm just doing what I can to change the world."

From Achala:

I just came back from going to Salmon beach. It's a community of 85 houses built right on the water down from Point Defiance Park. It was a low tide today at 1 o'clock. I went to collect litter and bits of tile to do the mirrors with. I get the most amazing pieces there. I walk back up and go through the dog park and meet a woman I have met there before. She has a bag tied to her waist. I ask what she is collecting and she said dog poop! We chat for a few minutes and I find out she is a nurse that travels. I ask her what agency she works for and she said Mary Bridge hospital, as a pediatric nurse. I said oh, because I just got re-certified as a nurse's aide and I wanted to hear about the agencies people work for. She then said "start your own". She is the 3rd person to tell me this and I am going into Olympia to get a business license tomorrow! I was already headed in that direction, but now it is confirmed. On a different walk altogether a few weeks ago I ran into a neighbor who just started her own business and said she believes in paying it forward. She is a career transition coach and no kidding...the name of her business is "Ripple Effect". She wants to help me! Chance...I know it isn't...Grace it is!!!!!!!

From Melissa:

There was this old man in the Redmond and Bridle trails area, severely hunched back had to be in his late 80's. I have not seen him in a while. He would walk for miles through my area picking up litter, it was amazing. He had severe spine

and cervical spine deformities, could not keep his head up and still he did this. It is sad, because I always wonder where he is. I just thought he was so special!

From Karuna:

On the way home from watering Al's plants, I drove by an apartment building where a man was taking his trash to the road for pick up. I noticed there was a big bag that was mostly filled with aluminum cans. I wondered if I should go back and get them but decided that was ridiculous. Moments later I changed my mind. I went back, found the man and asked if I could have the bag for a can project. He said "sure"! I was concerned I was going to get a bunch of nasty trash but that wasn't the case. There were about 90 cans in the bag. In addition there were many kitchen items which I cleaned up and took to Goodwill. I believe one of the lessons from that experience is to stay alert and take advantage of opportunities that come into your awareness.

From Laura:

I feel that Amma made this project just for me since I complained all year in my head about the litter and grime on Capitol Hill...I complained so much I think I irritated MA in Spirit, lol! Since I love Capitol Hill...this project was like Ma telling me to do it myself :)

From Aditi in Iowa:

There was a Burlington Railroad truck or 2 idling as I passed them early yesterday morning. I asked a helmeted gentlemen why they always ran the diesels when they were obviously polluting. He explained those repair trucks took about 20 minutes to be hydraulically conditioned for the day's work. He noted my 3 grocery bags of litter and commented on it and said he would take care of the stuff around the rail road depot truck area himself!

From Kirtana:

One good thing, though, is that the area stays clean for a while! Fewer litter hours [for me], but less litter. I'd say that end result is really good. :)

From Achala (written just before she left for a couple months in Connecticut:

I'm seriously going to miss my morning trash walk and chatting with the older men regulars who walk the route I do along the waterway. I gave all of them hugs this morning and another walker commented how lucky he was to get a hug from me and spontaneously I asked if she would like one too, proceeding to walk toward her with extended arms. As I was walking toward her I told her of the "Free Hug" campaign that went worldwide, we embraced and she smiled. What an Amma moment it was.....

From Jennifer:

I have started to pick up litter more often, recently, when I finally made the connection with Amma as Earth Mother figure. Of course I want to do it when I think of her!

From Theresa:

After seeing the pictures of our first work party Theresa wrote "Please sign me up. Looks like too much fun to miss out! Are you planning another work party soon?"

Closing:

I hope after reading the newsletter and seeing the pictures those of you who are not already members will feel like Theresa! To join write me at karunap108@comcast.net!

Also write me if:

- 1) You have a story or reflections to share. (I may use them in the newsletters. I will assume that is okay unless you ask me to keep your email confidential. I may shorten them or make small edits.)
- 2) You didn't get the earlier newsletters and want me to send them to you.
- 3) You have any other reason to want to write me!

I hope you all enjoy picking up litter and look forward to seeing some of you at the October 22 litter pick up work party in Seattle. Everyone from everywhere is welcome to join us. There will be plenty of litter available for all! Please let me know if you can come!

Thank you Mechas for making it possible for everyone to see the pictures in the email this time!

In Amma's Service,

Karuna

No piece of plastic is too small to pick up!

Achala