Addendum to the Benchmarking Steps

Additional ideas for litter program managers to grow their programs as suggested by members of the Virginia Council of Litter Prevention and Recycling

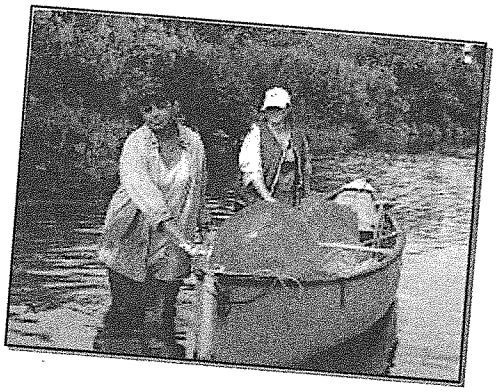
January, 2009

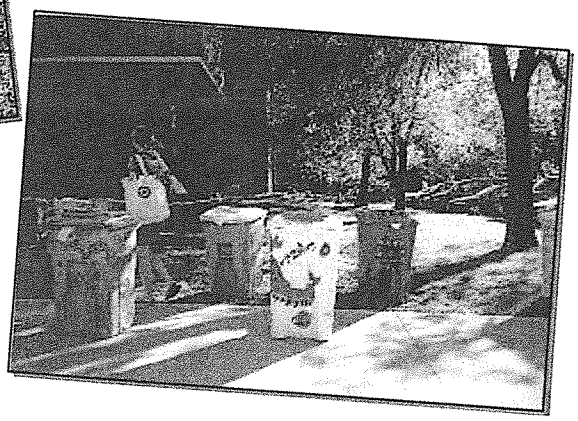
Introduction:

In the fall 2008, the Virginia Council on Litter Prevention and Recycling (VCLPR) held its annual conference. On Friday, October 24, the litter program coordinators had a facilitated discussion where they discussed what they liked about their litter programs and additional examples that could fit under the benchmarking steps survey that a sub-committee of the VCLPR created.

Most litter program coordinators discovered that elements of their litter programs could fit into all three categories of the benchmarking steps. The steps are designed not to measure a program and classify a program as a beginning, intermediate, or advanced program, but rather to help litter managers look at their programs and decide which direction they wish to grow their program.

Litter program coordinators are passionate about combating litter. As people took turns talking about their litter programs, it was like listening to people share their favorite recipes with one another. Enthusiasm exploded about the room! What follows is a compilation of additional ideas that were generated by the litter managers from across the Commonwealth of Virginia.





Beginning Litter Program Benchmarking List

1st Steps to Establishing a Litter Program

(1 – 2 Years)

Litter Website

If there is a government website, there should be a page with local litter information.

- Make the litter webpage part of the non-profit's page.
- Buy a domain name for the litter website.
- Add a page for Assign-a-Highway.
- Ask the IT people to help you to establish a litter page.
- Set up a free/inexpensive website by using GoDaddy.com or Microsoft Publisher.

Note: Web sites are critical for marketing and for providing information.

Market the Litter Program

The marketing segment should produce outreach materials to market and advertise the litter program.

- Write newspaper columns and press releases.
- Create Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for radio, television and movie trailer spots.
- Find sponsors for the PSAs. Have them pay for the PSA and/or insert information about the litter program into utility bills.
- Have litter poster and trash art contests.
- Have first-time offenders and litter offenders pick up trash.
- Make the public aware of your program by giving citizens flyers, brochures, litterbags, bandanas, door clings, etc.
- Have VIPs and town officials join cleanups.
- Partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and business groups.
- Advertise your program at the recycling centers and compost sites.
- Design a logo and create a catchy phrase or tag line. Some examples include Fairfax County's skunk with the caption "Litter Stinks." Examples of tag lines are "Keep Spotsy Spotless" or "Brunswick Stew not Litter."
- List the litter program in the local government directory.

Note: Take-aways should be useful and things that "razzle" such as denim pencils.

Community Outreach

The litter manager should plan to attend community events and set up a booth and have litter information available.

- Set up at festivals.
- Organize workshops and conferences and provide litter information at these events.
- A good time to distribute brochures and fliers is at tax/voting time.
- Host a Day in the Park.
- Host a March on Litter – City wide cleanup event.

Note: Pull people in so that they interact with you and your display. They should take away less paper and more memory.

Volunteer Recruitment and Management

Establish a plan to recruit volunteers and recognize them for the work that they do for your program. Reach out to community service groups such as the Kiwanis Club, Boy/Girl Scouts, etc.

- Work regionally through network of litter control coordinators, officers or volunteer recruitment office.
- Seek organized groups to volunteer for your litter programs, churches, scouts, Sierra Clubs, 4-H Groups, big businesses.
- Ask businesses if you can come to their business to meet/tell employees about the local litter program and invite employees to volunteer for your organization.
- Establish Silver, Gold and Platinum recognition awards that businesses can hang on their wall to recognize them as a clean business. Hand delivers the awards.
- Thank volunteers publically at Board of Supervisors meetings or through the media (newspaper).
- Use volunteer databases such as VolunteerMatch to recruit volunteers.
- Give volunteers tote bags and litter grabbers.

Note: Target your recruitments towards specific generations. Generation "X" people are likely to volunteer in groups. Baby Boomers are likely to volunteer as individuals.

Coordinate a Litter Pick up

The litter manager should plan one community-wide clean-up per year.

- Coordinate with local regional governments. (Many hands makes light work)
- Apply for special funding to do large regional cleanups.
- Coordinate litter pickups with events sponsored by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, Keep America Beautiful, Clean the Bay Day, National Rivers Month, Earth Day; the Virginia Department of Transportation advertises a spring and fall cleanup for Adopt-a-Highway volunteers.
- Make litter pick ups fun, offer prizes for strangest finds, seed money/gift certificates along the routes to be cleaned.
- Ask citizens to let you know of litter hotspots that need to be cleaned up. Target these during cleanup events.
- Host other cleanup events such as tire amnesty, white goods, e-waste, Household Hazardous Waste days.

Training

The litter manager should seek personal growth training opportunities to assist you in managing and developing your litter programs.

- Attend the Keep America Beautiful National Conference.
- Attend the Virginia Recycling Association Conference.
- Attend the Virginia Council on Litter Prevention and Recycling Conference.
- Attend Skill Path Development Classes.
- Check the Department of Environmental Quality website for environmental leadership training.
- Look for environmental education classes.
- Consider taking college level courses.

Intermediate Litter Program Benchmarking List
(2 – 5 Years)

Create an Interested Parties Mailing List
Establish a database with contact information so that you can communicate with groups of interested parties.

- Keep your mailing list up-to-date and continue to add to the list.
- Communicate with home owners, business associations and churches.
- Keep a database of previous volunteers and interested citizens.
- Keep a separate list of cleanup volunteers and a separate list of outraged citizens.
- Have people sign a pledge where they must provide contact information to get a (not) freebie.

Have resources available for public use to teach about litter
Create a display that can be borrowed. Compile lesson plans, books, and other resources and make them available to local leaders. Send the schools, group leaders, and other interested parties an email, letter, or postcard to let them know what you have available to them.

- Keep your resources and materials fresh and current. Change your display to keep it interesting. This is a continuous job.
- Put your resources on the website.
- Put pre-approved lesson plans and the Standards of Learning (SOLs) on the website.

Establish an in-school program
Partnership with the schools and prepare to go into schools to do presentations about litter. Let the schools know that you would like to come by sending them emails, letters or postcards with what you are offering and follow up with phone calls.

- Work with principals and teachers. Sell your lesson plans by showing up front what Standards of Learning (SOLs) will be achieved through your lesson plans.
- Partnership with private schools.
- The Virginia Wildlife Center – Critters Don't Need Litter and Kathleen Jacobs and Puppets are traveling programs that can teach about litter and recycling and make good assembly programs.
- Have an educational trailer that can travel to schools and bring exhibits on litter, recycling and household hazardous waste.

Note: If you are a new litter program and still need to establish a relationship/partnership with the schools, try reaching the schools by going through the superintendent.

Establish relationships with environmental groups in your jurisdiction that share similar missions

Meet the local master gardeners, soil and water conservation district representative, agricultural extension agent, etc. Establish liaisons between their organizations and your litter program. Work with them to provide support, promote and advertise each other's programs.

- Other environmental organizations may offer grants that can support your litter program.
- Especially good times to work together are for Earth Day festivals and waterway cleanups.
- Contact the local Planning District Commission.
- Contact the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Women's Club, Lions Club, Ruritan Club, Farm Bureau Boy and Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs and Environmental Education Team Members.
- High Schools have environmental clubs.
- "Make a friend" on City Council or the County Board of Supervisors.

Investigate "Adopt-a" Programs

Partnership with the local Adopt-a-Highway and Adopt-a-Stream program managers. Meet them and establish ways that you can work together to promote and support each other's programs. Establish other Adopt-a- programs in your community such as Adopt-a-School, Park, Spot, etc.

- Offer different types of adoption to volunteers such as Adopt-a-Highway, Beach, Spot, Street, School Grounds, Trail, Waterway, and Park. Set a minimum number of cleanups a year for a group wishing to participate in an Adopt-a-program.
- Adopt-a-Highway coordinators may be willing to help with picking up filled litter bags.

Retention of Volunteers

Develop a plan to retain your volunteers. Plan recognition events such as picnics and award ceremonies. Make participation in litter cleanup events fun and give your volunteers motivation to continue their participation. Examples include providing prizes for the strangest object found on a cleanup. Make it a scavenger hunt. Plant fun things in the area to be cleaned such as money or gift certificates. (Note: keep track of where you place the "fun litter" so that you can retrieve it if it isn't found).

- Get the contact information from first-time volunteers. Contact them in the future when you need help again.
- Get volunteers to participate in the planning of events.
- Invite volunteers to a Holiday appreciation dinner.
- Continue to communicate with your volunteers throughout the year.

Advanced Litter Program Benchmarking List

(6+ Years)

Apply for Special Project Funding, Competitive Grants, Solicit Donations and Sponsorships to Expand the Litter Program

Every litter program within the Commonwealth is different. Look at other effective litter programs within the state and throughout the nation and decide how you would like to expand your litter program. Be a pioneer and be willing to "think outside of the box."

- Check out the Virginia Naturally website for grant opportunities.
- Apply for the Coca-Cola Bin Recycling Program.
- Look for sponsorships/partnerships for Earth Day. Coordinate with Helping Hands and the Storm Drain Marking program.
- Partnership with Retail Alliances.

Partnership or Sponsor an Educational Environmental Stewardship Event like an Earth Day Event

Invite the organizations in your community with similar environmental missions to the Earth Day or other environmental awareness events.

- Implement Kids in the Creek Programs.
- Host an Earth Day event. Invite environmental exhibitors, have game booths, arts and crafts, and entertainment. Advertise it as a fun family event.
- Partnership with museums that have an environmental interest, colleges and universities, retail alliances, TV and radio stations, and independent recycling businesses.

Establish Relationships with the Courts, Judges and Correctional Facilities

Meet with court officials and establish a plan for using people who are given community service to be assigned to your litter program. Establish procedures for tracking and reporting community service hours worked to the court appointed officials.

- Assign-a-Highway Program – dinners with the judges to discuss the AAH program and work on solving problems.
- Inquire about possible weekend and work-day assignments.
- Directly contact the regional jail and community service organizations.

Investigate the Implementation of an Assign-a-Highway Program for your Jurisdiction

Prepare a report about the benefits of the Assign-a-Highway program and make a presentation to the local government officials. Solicit the support of the local government and judges. Hire a litter officer.

Develop a Teacher and School Outreach Program

Selling your program to the local school administrators is crucial. Contact the local school board office, or county administrator's office to get a copy of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). You can also download the SOLs from the web by going to: http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/sol.html. Designing your program so that it meets the SOLs will help you to sell your program to the schools. List the targeted SOLs on the lessons/presentations that you would like to make to the school. Write to the school administrators, and follow up with a phone call. Encourage the use of an environmental curriculum, develop lesson plans that make use of an integrated curriculum (can be used to teach all the subjects, math, science, reading, social studies, etc) and list the SOLs on each plan that will be met by teaching your lesson.

- High School students may be able to help to bring your programs into the elementary schools.

Program Development and Maintenance

Evaluate your program and work on making it stronger. Each litter program will have some volunteers that are interested in doing more for their community and may be interested in becoming more involved in your program. These are your key volunteers. They can assist you like a staff member could. Train them in volunteer management and community outreach. Consider establishing intern positions in your litter program. Maximize your opportunities to seek out volunteers. Advertise on your website or Volunteer Match, local high schools and nearby colleges.

- Establish a Clean Community Commission.
- Establish an Earth Day Planning Committee.
- Establish a Fundraising Committee.
- Establish an Office of Volunteer Resources.
- Tap your outraged citizens to chair various committees.
- Share regionally with other litter program managers to brainstorm, problem solve, do strategic planning, and make annual assessment.
- Work to create a regional common vision that you and other local governments can cooperate and share resources.

A Litter Program Addresses more than just Waste out of Place

Litter is more than just an unsightly problem. It affects human health and is a hazard to wildlife. The more that people recycle, the less trash will be created and the longer our natural resources will last. Here are some suggestions:

Implement a Save our Streams program to educate interested groups about the harmful effects of litter in our waterways. DEQ regional staff can help the litter manager to locate streams that have been affected by litter and can do presentations to groups about the harmful effects of the runoff into streams.

Storm drain Marking Program: Work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to get volunteers to mark storm drains.

Implement a Recycling Element to Cleanups: Give a team that is going to conduct a pick up colored bags and clear bags. The colored bags are to contain trash while the clear bags are used for recyclables.

Consider Beautification Projects: Littered spots attract more litter. When people see an area that is nicely landscaped, they are less likely to drop their trash there.

- Certify your volunteers.
- Install rain gardens to help with storm water management.
- Partnership with community colleges so students can get credit.
- Host workshops to teach citizens how to do environmental monitoring. They can monitor streams on a regular basis.
- Consider a cigarette butt awareness program/partnership.
- Consider programs run through local and state parks.

"Expand your programs gradually.

Build on successes.

Tell the world how good you are.

You are economic development!"

~ Quote from the group session October 24, 2008