

Green Friends

Pacific Northwest Litter Pick-up Project

A flower has such a short life span, and yet it offers itself wholeheartedly to others.

Amma



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April Greetings

March was such a productive month for the Pacific Northwest Litter Project. Seattle had two big work parties and the number of members from all over the region who reported picking up litter during the month increased significantly. The first article about the project was published in Natural Awakenings.

So many of us have felt blessed by the experiences we have had when cleaning up litter, whether it be garbage or cigarette butts. For some it is a meditative experience. Swami Ramakrishna was joking in a recent email, wondering whether I was seeing cigarette butts in meditation!

As I'm writing this I'm remembering Amma saying to me "Remember what you are really focusing on is what is under the litter, so pick up litter and say your mantra!"

I will look forward to hearing about your April adventures!

Karuna

GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

GreenFriends 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)

To join the Pacific Northwest Green Friends Litter Project write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net

To learn more about the project go to: www.seattlesatsang.amma.org/litterproject.html



Reading suggestions from our Members!

A San Diego innovator pays \$3 a pound for cigarette butts. But whatever can you recycle them into?

<http://www.miller-mccune.com/environment/can-cigarette-butts-be-recycled-32091/>

Amar

I just heard about this movie that out right now called "Bag It"

I thought you might be interested too!
<http://www.bagitmovie.com/>

Achala

Beacon Food Forest

A Food Forest is a gardening technique or land management system that mimics a woodland ecosystem but substitutes in edible trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals

<http://beaconfoodforest.weebly.com/index.html>

Our First Published Litter Project Article

Natural Awakenings Page 5

<http://issuu.com/seattleawakenings/docs/seattlena-2012-04?mode=window&pageNumber=1>

Look at page 15 to see the first 2012 Amma Tour ad!

Kumuda recommends the article on Forest Bathing on page 28.

Litter Project Membership

As of March 31 we had 220 members.
11 new members in March!

("Members" are individuals who signed up for the project or who have participated in work parties.)

Litter Project Hours

In March, 83 members reported picking up 190.24 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 : 2.29 hours
Range 2 minutes to 15 hours
Median :1.5 hours

The group has picked up 1529 hours of litter since the project began in July 2011!

Words from Amma

Man and Nature

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. Thus, Nature helps us to become closer to God and teaches us to truly worship Him. In reality, Nature is nothing but God's visible form which we can behold and experience through our senses. Indeed, by loving and serving Nature, we are worshipping God Himself.

Work Party in Woodinville



It is interesting how many of the opportunities that have come to this project have come in the form of cigarette butt clean up. We had two such opportunities in March. On the afternoon of Thursday, March 1, King County Tobacco Prevention Program contacted us and asked if we could clean another Woodinville park. They were meeting with the Woodinville city council the following Monday and needed to know how many cigarette butts were in the park. (As you may remember King County's Smoke Free Parks division has been awarding mini grants to nonprofit organizations to pick up cigarette butts in county parks. This gives them the data they need to show the extent of the cigarette butt problem in a given park.)

In 48 hours we were able to gather 21 people to pick up the butts in Woodinville's Wilmot Gateway Park. Together we picked up 932 butts!

The opportunity to receive grants for picking up cigarette butts is over. The non profit groups who

participated in the King County project picked up more than 24,079 cigarette butts. Thirty-four percent of them (8901 butts) were picked up by our group! We were able to add \$2150 to the Pacific Northwest Amma Center fund as the result of these grants.

Status of County Parks as of 4/5/2012

Tobacco-free with enforcement- Black Diamond – up to \$200 fine

Tobacco-free, park-wide. Voluntary- Bothell, Burien, Covington, Shoreline, Vashon Park District

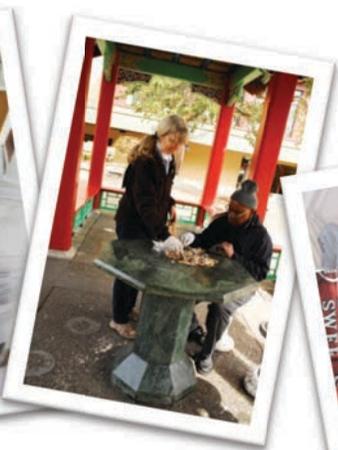
Tobacco-free where posted –Auburn, Kirkland, Mercer Island (entire park anywhere there's a playground or kid play area), Seattle

Smoke-free, designated areas- Snoqualmie

These cities are currently considering policies: King County Parks, Lake Forest Park, Woodinville, Des Moines,

Duvall, Carnation

Kent has smoke-free areas of their park.



16,560 Cigarette Butts!



On March 25, twenty-four Litter Project members from Seattle and Tacoma met at Hing Hay Park in the International District of Seattle. We spread out over the whole district and in a period of only two hours, picked up a total of 16,560 cigarette butts. Some team members counted the butts while others were gathering them. About a dozen stayed late to finish the counting. The number of butts still on the ground when we left the district defies imagination.

We held this particular work party in support of Kick Butts Day an annual celebration of youth leadership and activism in the fight against tobacco use. (<http://www.kickbuttsday.org/>) The event is organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored by the United Health Foundation



Stories and Reflections from Kick Butts Day

While the International District event was the big work party, numerous Litter Project members throughout the northwest cleaned up butts during that week. Here are some of their stories.

From Clarice in Seattle:

On Wed I spent a half hour picking up butts in the neighborhood where I walk and pick up trash. I just counted them and I have 45 butts.

From Visala in Seattle:

After I told my friend about picking up the cigarette butts he said "Visala: that is amazing! Now I want to start a litter pick-up group."

From Dhanusri in North Bend:

My daughter Anne and I did a KICK BUTT pickup in North Bend at the dog park... Happy to say only 1 butt...a very different story on the main road in front of their home... collected 41 in a half block.

From Aditi in Iowa:

My walk Saturday morning focused on butts as well as trash. Can't believe that I picked up 251 butts in a 4 1/2 block length, and that was just curbside!

Was literally dizzy by the time I reached the Farmer's Market from all the bending, but whooee!

From JoAnn in Edmonds:

Prior to taking part in picking up cigarette butts, I had been aware of the amount of litter in our city. After two sessions of picking up cigarette debris, I am now more sensitive to the number of cigarette butts that are present. It is sad, that even facilities that provide containers for cigarettes butts still have their grounds littered. This has added a new vision of what we are doing to our environment.

From Shuba in Oregon:

Michael (my 19 year old son) and I went to Pacific City beach area. We did not find many cig butts at the rest area, beach, restaurants, bars, or surf shops. We only collected 95 cig butts. We did get a lot of trash off the beach and will participate in the Solve beach clean-up next weekend. I will email hours at the end of the month. It was a lot of fun and I am looking forward to doing it again.

Another Cigarette Story!

From Dee in Eugene:

I work in an agency that serves homeless and low-income persons. Our clients are able to hang out safely at our facility and many of them smoke outside. I have been cleaning up the neighborhood and grounds of their food and cigarette debris. This is especially important because some folks are annoyed by the presence of homeless people in this area - but the homeless are welcome nowhere else either.

I recently talked the agency into purchasing three exterior, locking, and flameproof cigarette butt receptacles - part of my sales pitch included my willingness to empty these regularly for one year.

About a month ago we received the three receptacles and put them up: one for the staff smoking area, one for the homeless smoking area and one for the smoking area used by those in substance abuse treatment. I continue to pick up the cigarette butts in these areas and encourage folks to use the receptacles.

What I've learned is that those with the least ability to take care of themselves (homeless) are also the least able to care about their environment. Staff are the most responsive and those in substance abuse treatment are doing pretty well, although their area is improving more slowly than staff's.

More Litter Stories and Reflections

From Amaresh in Victoria, about his experience in China:

Shanghai is a very clean city of 23 million and many people seem to be employed as sweepers, paper and metal collectors on bicycle carts. They ring their bell as they make their way through the streets. It's inspiring to see how easy it can be.

Litter cleanup in public areas by diligent employees is continuous from the early morning through the evening. Few people litter- they are mostly picking up leaves.

1. Sign in public area
2. A recycler on the streets of Shanghai separating metal from plastic.
3. Note the well designed waste container- organics, recyclables, cigarette butts, and batteries are segregated



1



2



3

From Kat in Richland:

After enjoying the most beautiful day of the year, I noticed the wind picking up about 15 minutes ago. I turned on the news for a weather check & found out that we will have strong winds & rain here tomorrow & heavy snow on the pass. Tuesday it's expected to snow here w/strong wind, but be better in the pass. I will see how it goes & update.

Seems so weird after the sunny balmy day we had today. It was so beautiful!

I was put walking & picking up trash and saw another woman doing the same!! She was down on the river's edge & too far away for me to get her attention without really yelling. I will watch for her again.

With all the spring wind, there is so much trash along the river--mostly plastic shopping bags caught in the trees. They are so hard to get out of the trees when I can reach them. Most of them are unreachable. I counted 52 bags stuck in trees that I could not reach in a span of three miles!! I managed to wrestle about ten out of the trees. 62 plastic bags in 3 miles. I think Tri Cities occupies 26 miles on each side of the river. That's over 500 bags! Gross!!!!

From Dhanusri in North Bend:

Both my daughters live on bike race and cycle routes and I do pick-up Sunday morning when many cyclists are out and there is less traffic. Neighbors and many, many cycle riders thank us for the pick-up.

General Green Friends News

Saturday, May 19th will be the Annual Seattle Satsang Garage and Plant Sale

From 7:00 am to 5:00 pm

Sevites needed to:

1. Bake goods to sell
2. Bring used items to sell
3. Bring divided plants, new starts, or houseplants to sell

Buyers needed

This sale is part of the "GREENWOOD GARAGE SALE DAY" which brings hundreds of people to Greenwood. We made \$2000 two years in a row in 2009 and 2010.

Let's all gear up together to make it happen again? Please RSVP and let us know how you can participate.

Sale will be at Gaurang and Visala's home: 8201 Greenwood Avenue North, Seattle

All proceeds go to our NW Center Ashram Project

If you can bring plants for the Green Friends Plant Sale, they would be much welcomed and appreciated. It is a good time to start planting seeds for the plants we will sell at the sale.

Please let me know what plants you will be bringing to donate to the plant sale. E-mail me at donnachatel@gmail.com. The plants that do not sell will be sold at the Amma Program Green Friends table.

If you have any questions about the Green Friends Plant sale, you can e-mail me at: donnachatel@gmail.com



Serving Mother Nature in a Local Park

By Donna Chantel, Seattle Satsang Green Friends Coordinator

Volunteering at local parks is something I like to do. I found the WA Native Plant website helpful in listing native plant information and volunteer opportunities in our local parks. There are opportunities for park restoration as well as getting rid of invasive species. I have enjoyed doing this type of thing at my local park/parks. It is one way of connecting to Mother Nature and not having to drive too far to get to the project.

Here is a link to the WA Native Plant Society website's page for volunteer information:

<http://www.wnps.org/cps/volunteer.html#kingco>