

Community Cleanups and Plastic Reduction

Project Summary

This project primarily deals with limiting the effects of plastic pollution on the environment in Jacksonville, Florida. Plastic pollution in recent years has become a growing epidemic in Jacksonville and all over the world. With more rivers and oceans being polluted with single-use plastic each year, it is not long before there is a significant impact on human health and the ecosystem. The materials and practices we choose to adopt as a society have a pivotal role in the spread and development of diseases. Through the organization of clean-ups, administration of surveys, and documentation of the amount of plastic collected, this project highlighted the evident correlation between environmentalism and human health.

Outcomes

- The first community cleanup took place at Palmetto Leaves Regional Park. Palmetto Leaves is approx. 400 acres and contains a canoe/kayak launch, picnic facilities, restrooms and paved nature trail. There were 20 volunteers that participated, and the cleanup lasted two hours (9:00 A.M - 11:00 A.M). Approximately 25 lbs. of plastic collected, empty paint cans, glass bottles, and 4 tires.
- The second community cleanup took place at the Northbank Riverwalk. The Northbank Riverwalk is in Downtown Jacksonville located along the St. Johns River. It is an area highly susceptible to pollution and is frequently visited by families and joggers. For the second cleanup, 17 volunteers participated. The cleanup lasted three hours and took place from 8:30 A.M – 11:30 A.M. Approximately 10 bags of plastic and trash collected, ranging from ocean debris to plastic found in parking lots.
- The third and final cleanup is scheduled to take place on Saturday March 27, 2021 at Jacksonville Beach Pier. The cleanup will begin at 10 A.M and conclude at 12:00 P.M. It is expected that 60 volunteers across the Environmental Center, UNF Surfrider, and UNF Public Health Alumni Network (PHAN) will participate.



Impacts

- This cleanup enabled a better understanding between the correlation of plastic pollution and environmental decline
- Reached a wide array of students/individuals from UNF and beyond.
- Post event surveys had an estimated 80% response rate, with most participants reflecting positively on the event they attended



Volunteer Reflections

- “I really enjoyed the location of this cleanup!” (Cleanup 2)
- “It was the perfect place for a cleanup.” (Cleanup 1)
- “It was eye opening to see how much single-used plastics were found near the river.” (Cleanup 2)
- “This cleanup made me realize the persistence such kinds of trash (plastics) have on the environment.” (Cleanup 1)



Acknowledgments

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- UNF Public Health Alumni Network (PHAN)