

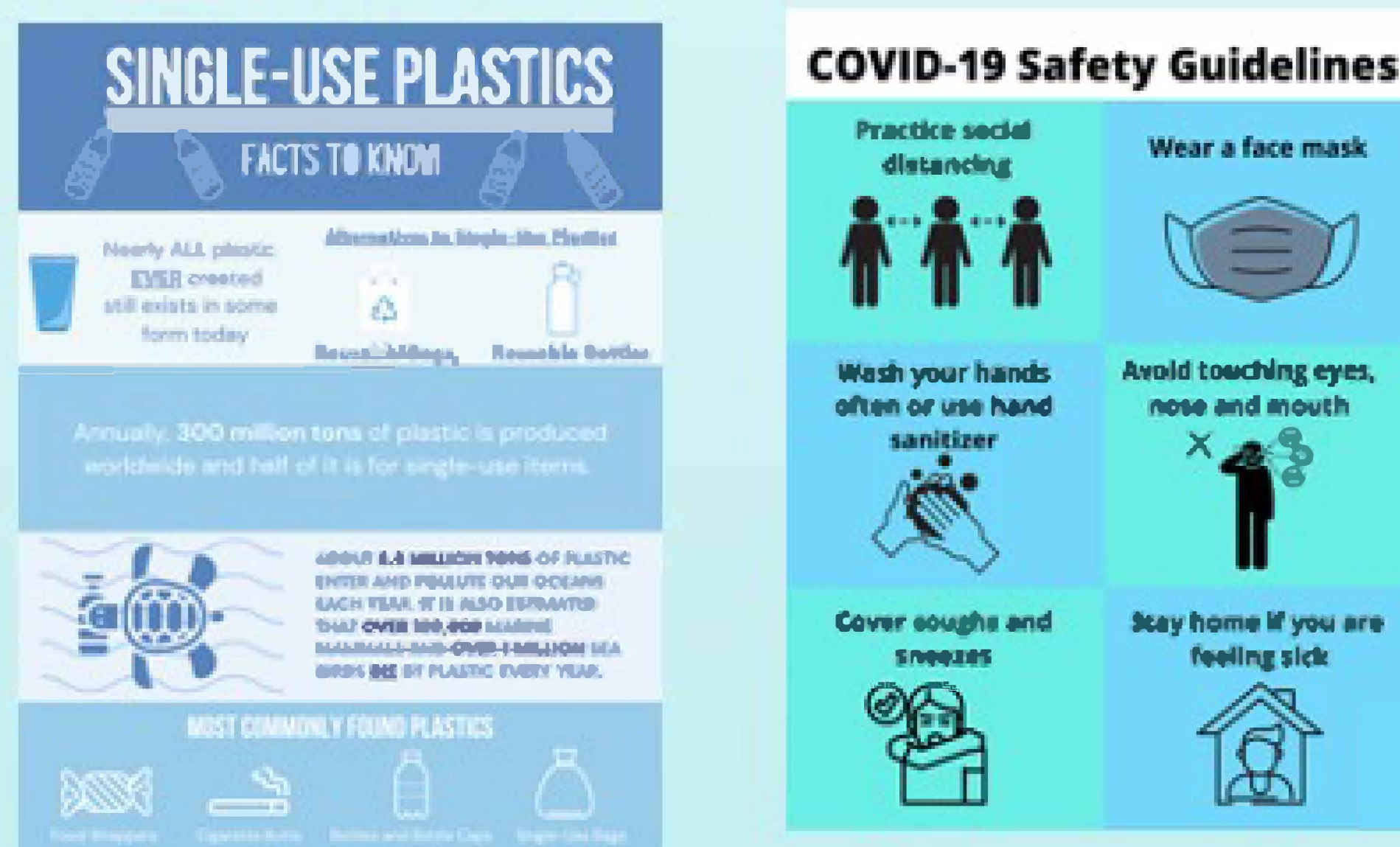
Community Cleanups and Plastic Reduction

Project Summary

The Environmental Center and the NOAA Marine Debris Program are working to reduce single-use plastic consumption and foster long-term pro-environmental behaviors among undergraduate students in coastal communities. This project aimed to create education and outreach activities to raise awareness about marine debris, facilitate understanding of the connections between actions and impacts in the marine environment, and encourage behavior change.

Educational Materials

For our community cleanups we created safety and educational material for the students. Our focus for the cleanups was to educate students about single-use plastics and their impacts on the marine environment.



Community Cleanup 1

Our first community cleanup took place at Palmetto Leaves Reginal Park- South Entrance. Palmetto Reginal Park is approximately 400 acres. The south entrance contains a kayak launch that leads to Julington Creek and miles of hiking trails.



Community Cleanup 2

Our second community cleanup took place at the Northbank Riverwalk. The Northbank Riverwalk is in downtown Jacksonville along the St. Johns River. I chose this location because the St. Johns River is an important part of our community however, with increased traffic also means increased littering and improper disposal of trash which could end up in the river. After the cleanup students were encouraged to visit the Riverside Arts Market.



Community Cleanup 3

Our third community cleanup took place at the Jacksonville Beach Pier. This cleanup was in partnership with the UNF Surfrider Foundation and the UNF Public Health Alumni Network. Before the cleanup there was an instructor led yoga session at the beach.



Outcomes

- Participants: 62 volunteers
- Community Service : 106 hours
- 22 bags of trash collected
- We collected approximately 26 lbs. of plastic with Styrofoam being the most common plastic, 4 tires and a few various road signs.

Post cleanup survey analysis

- 65% of students who participated in the cleanups had not visited the cleanup locations before therefore we introduced students to new locations in Jacksonville.
- 80% of students who participated in the cleanups increased their knowledge on the negative impacts of single-use plastics.
- 85% of students who participated in the cleanups are more likely to avoid single-use plastics going forward.



Comments from Students

- **Cleanup 1-** "I really enjoyed this cleanup! It was very nice to get out into nature and make it better for everyone. It made me sad to see all of the single use items that were at the park and made me disgusted with myself for using certain single use plastic and seeing how they could end up."
- **Cleanup 2-** "I really liked the location of the clean-up. Initially, I didn't expect the Riverwalk to have as much trash as it did because it's a nice area. It was eye-opening seeing how much single-used plastics were found near the river. It showed the persistence of such kind of trash in the environment. "
- **Cleanup 2-** "It was the perfect place for a clean-up. Such a pretty view and the Riverside Market was so much fun for afterwards."