

Keep Randolph County Beautiful is a new KAB affiliate, recognized on May 18, 2016. This Affiliation is unique to the Keep America Beautiful Affiliate network because the hosting Organization is the North Carolina Zoo. Prior to organizing, the Zoo had coordinated Watershed Litter Awareness and Cleanup programs as a part of NC Big Sweep. In 2015, NC Big Sweep disbanded, but efforts to keep momentum going on Watershed protection helped create KRCB. Board members include County Officials, Representatives from several of the 9 municipal governments within the county, the Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority, the North Carolina Zoo, the Randolph County Soil and Water Conservation District and Waste Management Corporation.

In an effort to promote awareness of problems associated with Cigarette Waste, and the problems it can impart to surface water through storm water runoff, KRCB has conducted several cleanups that deal primarily with Cigarette Waste.

In 2016, we worked with a group of 113 Students from the Asheboro High School “Zoo School”. The Zoo School is a remote campus of the High school located on the grounds of the North Carolina Zoo. Approximately 120 students, grades 9-12 attend the Zoo School where the focus is on problem solving and inquiry-based learning. The school curriculum includes service learning opportunities as well.

On Friday, October 28, 2016, KRCB worked with teachers and students to conduct a 90 minute Cigarette Waste Cleanup in an area that covers about 30 acres of Downtown Asheboro. Students and staff were encouraged to wear “Super Hero” costumes as an observance of Halloween, and to illustrate the visual point that “heroes” are simply ordinary people willing to do extraordinary actions.



Cigarette Filters are ubiquitous and rather toxic once inappropriately discarded. The filter medium itself is usually a plastic called Cellulose Acetate. This is drawn to a thin fiber and bundled to make the filter. They do their job, trapping numerous toxins such as Nicotine, Arsenic, Lead and Cadmium. An associate in Canada has provided us with information that notes a single filter is capable of rendering 10 gallons of water uninhabitable for fish and amphibians.

In the US, each year approximately 176,000,000 pounds of cigarette filters are inappropriately discarded. This is approximately 2.5 times the weight of the Battleship North Carolina. Many of these filters make it to storm drains. Many others have their toxic elements transported to surface water with the rains.

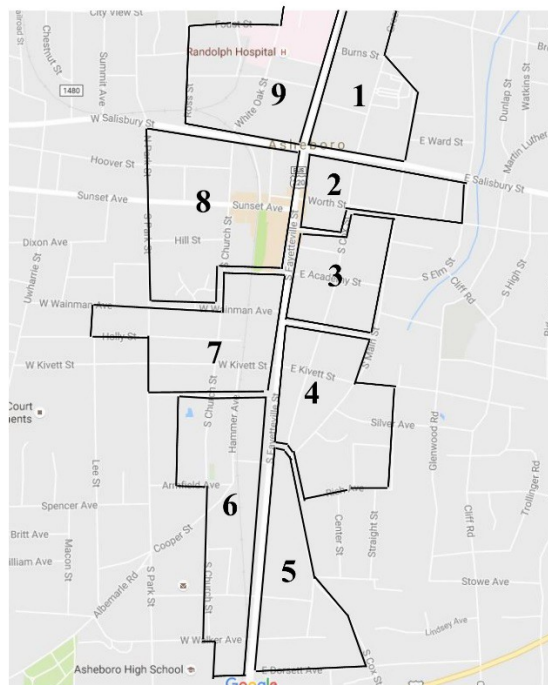
In order to make our particular cleanup a bit more interesting, KRCB secured several donations of Food Coupons from Chick-fil-A, Biscuitville and From Sodexo Life Services-catering contractors with the City Schools and with the North Carolina Zoo. These were given as door prizes to the Students, but to be eligible for the drawing, each student had to fill a 6"x6" zip lock bag with cigarette filters.



Once collected, the filters are shipped to Terracycle, a company that finds recycling outlets for unusual waste streams. Terracycle works with Native Spirit Tobacco Company to recycle the filters. All paper and tobacco are separated with water and sent to a non-food waste composting operation. The Cellulose Acetate Fibers are fluffed, and mixed with concrete to produce paving stones.



The students rendezvous at a Park in Downtown Asheboro (Bicentennial Park) which the City allows us to use at no charge. Students are divided into teams and each team has a particular zone to clean (see attached map). We send a teacher or staff person with each group to serve as chaperone and time keeper.



After instructions are given, students all are provided gloves, bags, and safety vests. Teams move out around noon and must be back at the park by 1:30PM. All of the filter bags and other litter are collected. Filters are kept separate so they can be sent to Terracycle, while the City of Asheboro agrees to pick up the collected litter.

Approximately 1/3 of the students dressed in some form of costume. We do this to promote awareness by the downtown merchants. While collecting Cigarette Filters there are three conclusions that each group usually discovers:

- 1) This is a gross habit
- 2) We had no idea that the cigarette waste problem was so bad
- 3) People waste a bunch of money on this

In 2016, the crew of 113 Students and 7 Staff and Faculty managed to collect approximately 150 pounds of assorted Litter including several syringes, assorted car parts, beverage containers and plastic bags. After shipping the filters to Terracycle, they tell us that the crew collected 13,200 filters in the 90 minute time frame of the cleanup.



Using the example that one filter can poison 10 gallons of water, the filter collection helped protect 132,000 gallons of surface water!



Creeks and streams draining downtown Asheboro flow directly into the Deep River, and ultimately into the Cape Fear.

Though this is the first year the “Caped Crusade” has been a part of KRCB, Last year, while working toward our Affiliation, the same cleanup was done, netting a collection of 11,150 filters. It is our hope to continue this program, incorporating more area and participants while getting the word out that tossing your filters onto the ground is not an acceptable practice for quality water.