

Spring cleaning the environment

Area cleanups planned to mark Earth Day

By Eileen Mozinski Schmidt
Special to Conley Media

As Earth Day approaches, volunteers will head out to beautify areas around southeast Wisconsin.

The Waukesha County Technical College Community Cleanup will be held on Saturday.

The event will help beautify local green spaces and clean up a few area parks, including Retzer Nature Center, Kiwanis Village Park, Lakefront Park, Peffer Park and others, according to a press release.

"It is part of our 100-year anniversary celebration," said Dee Dee Wallace, re-entry navigator in the college's recruitment and engagement office and a coordinator of the cleanup event.

Anniversary events are planned for throughout the year to mark the centennial. Wallace said if the cleanup goes well, the college may consider holding the event annually.

"We're trying to get college students and staff and faculty, both the campus and the community, to come together," she said.

Wallace said WCTC is working with the Retzer Nature Center and said volunteers will work at about 10 parks in the Pewaukee area.

The cleanup will also include the campus, along with the trails between campus and Pewaukee High School. Wallace said the college is coordinating with the school district and Wisconsin Department of Transportation to work on the nearby exit ramps.

The goal is to gather around 500 volunteers for the cleanup, according to Wallace.

Registration online is open until Friday and walk-ins will be accepted on the day of the event, according to Wallace.

"We are beginning and ending on our campus," said Wallace, who said volunteers will need to provide their own transportation to assigned sites.

The day will include a light breakfast, short welcome from college President Richard Barnhouse, cleaning at the selected sites for about two hours and a light lunch back at campus, Wallace said.

The cleanup will allow participants to work on some of the green spaces all area residents enjoy, and to perhaps have a chance to spend time in and learn about a new area or park, according to Wallace.

"They may be assigned to a park they've never been to. I think it will be a nice opportunity for the community," she said.



Photo submitted by WCTC

A view of the Waukesha County Technical College campus. The WCTC Earth Day Campus & Community Cleanup is on Saturday. Volunteers will view up area sites, including Retzer Nature Center, Kiwanis Village Park, Lakefront Park, Peffer Park and others, according to the college's website.

"Retzer Nature Center has some cool assignments for families, like painting the benches."

— Dee Dee Wallace
Coordinator of the cleanup event at WCTC

In addition to cleanup, volunteers will help with mulching and other projects.

"Retzer Nature Center has some cool assignments for families, like painting the benches," Wallace said.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper cleanup

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust will host a cleanup on Saturday, according to Josh Schlicht, stewardship manager.

"We're a nonprofit based out of West Bend, but our service area is Ozaukee and Washington counties, with 35 plus nature preserves," he said, of the land trust organization.

The upcoming cleanup is through a part-

nership with Milwaukee Riverkeeper.

"It's their 28th annual spring cleanup," said Schlicht, who said the organization works to improve the conditions of the Milwaukee River and its tributaries.

The area land trust has been hosting a spring cleanup with the group for several years, according to Schlicht.

"Ours is at Fellenz Woods in West Bend, on Decorah Road east of town," he said, noting that registration for the cleanup is through Milwaukee Riverkeeper.

"The property we'll be on has about 2 miles of Milwaukee River frontage. We'll hike out to the river and walk along the shoreline," said Schlicht, who recommended participants bring waterproof boots.

"We'll probably do a little roadside cleanup, too," he said.

Other Milwaukee Riverkeeper cleanup events in Washington County include: River Hill Park, 1141 Riverview Drive in Kewaskum. Meet at the River Hill Park Pavilion.

Fireman's Park, 510 Main St. in Newburg. Meet at the Fireman's Park concession stand. All Milwaukee Riverkeeper

spring cleanup events run from 9 a.m. to noon.

The high waters of spring tend to bring up a lot of things, according to Schlicht, who said the lower levels along the riverfront tend to be consolidation points for items.

"It's eye-opening to see the trash. It ends up in the lowest spots. It's up to us to clean it," he said.

Attendance at the volunteer cleanup has varied depending on the weather and time of day, according to Schlicht.

"Last year was a good turnout with around 20 people," he said. "The event happens rain or shine."

The cleanup effort leaves participants with a good feeling, Schlicht said.

"It's great, people love it. It feels good to give back to our waterways. To make them cleaner and better for our critters," he said.

The land trust organization hosts its own events, as well, according to Schlicht. Tree plantings, plug plantings and work days are scheduled for dates this month and in May.