

Beyond Belief Network Event Guides: Park Cleanup

Cleaning up a park is a great seasonal activity for groups of any size or age. Children as young as 3 can also be involved with picking up trash. While Earth Day (April 22) is a popular day to volunteer, parks may need more attention later on in the year.

Tips to Get Started

Get in contact. Contact your local metro park (if applicable) to see if they have a designated program. The park service may also provide equipment or have special instructions. When planning, set a date and time that works for your group. You may also choose a time that the park is less likely to be busy. A few hours is more manageable than an all-day event. Don't forget to promote your event in your community (e.g., flyers, electronic message boards, local media)! Your group may gain a few extra volunteers.

Other places need cleaning too. Although this guide focuses on cleaning parks, there are other locations that can benefit from cleanup efforts. Beaches, rivers and highways are also susceptible to litter and trash. If interested, have your group contact the relevant authorities to see if there is a designated program for a given location.

It's going to be a mess. Before the event, instruct your volunteers to wear closed-toe shoes and clothes they don't mind getting dirty. Don't forget to designate a meeting spot at the park. At the location, set up a "home base" with bags, gloves, brooms, water, and snacks.

Cleanup. Make sure all volunteers know the areas they'll be cleaning, areas they aren't cleaning, dumpsters, etc. If necessary, have plant material or recyclable materials separated from the rest of the trash. Otherwise, put waste materials in the correct dumpster or make arrangements to take them to a recycling plant, etc. A few minutes before your scheduled end time, start calling volunteers back to "home base."

Fruits of labor. As a reward for all the volunteers, consider hosting a picnic lunch. If your group plans to eat directly after the event, try and get it set up so volunteers can start eating as soon as they've finished. Give yourself 10-15 minutes to get food and utensils out.

Necessary Equipment

In order to have a successful cleanup, your group should have the following equipment:

Plenty of trash bags

Reusable rubber gloves or heavy-duty
work gloves

Brooms (for sidewalks)

Water

Hand sanitizer

Bags for recyclable material (if
applicable)

Bags for plant material (if applicable)

First-aid kit