



Dan River High School, JROTC

# THE PICKUP EXPRESS



News and Ideas for Adopt-a-Highway Volunteers

## Spruce up for spring April 16

It's a rite of spring for Adopt-a-Highway volunteers. Every year when the snow has finally melted and the sun is shining warmly once again, it's time to get out and clean up the Commonwealth's roadways.

The Saturday (April 16) that kicks off Historic Garden Week (April 16-24, 2005) in Virginia is the traditional date selected for The Adopt-a-Highway Spring Cleanup. Adopt-a-Highway groups are invited to get out in force on that day to prepare our state for visitors. Virginia boasts the largest and oldest Historic Garden Week in the country, and it draws thousands of visitors each year. Three dozen Historic Garden Week tours are scheduled across the state.

Plan now for your group to do its part to help make Virginia look beautiful! You won't be alone.

While marking your calendar, make a note that VDOT is participating in a statewide coordinated effort to fight litter (see related story on page 3) that will be held from April 9 through June 2005.

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The "kickoff period" will be held April 9 - 24, coinciding with Stewardship Virginia's spring effort (April 1 - May 31) and Earth Day (April 22) activities. If you cannot do your Adopt-a-Highway pickup on April 16, please schedule it for another date within the campaign period.

Also, May 6 is Clean Commute Day in Virginia.

To report your spring pickup effort, please call 1-800-PRIDE VA (1-800-774-3382) or send e-mail to [adoptahighway@VDOT.Virginia.gov](mailto:adoptahighway@VDOT.Virginia.gov)

## FAQ of the month

**Q.** Can my children pick up litter with me?

**A.** Yes. Children are allowed to participate in highway adoptions and cleanups; however, there are some very specific rules and procedures you and the groups must follow in these cases for safety's sake.

The contact person in the group must inform VDOT if anyone under 18 years old will participate in any of the group's pickups. No one under 18 years old may participate in interstate or interchange cleanups. In addition, groups must provide at least one adult supervisor for every six children under 18 years old.

Groups with participants under age 10 may adopt highways when the local VDOT office has determined that the specified roadway is safe and the groups have committed adult supervisors.

## Looking ahead

Virginia's statewide fall cleanup.



Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	27	28	28	28	30	

## Commissioner's Column



I want to thank Adopt-a-Highway volunteers for doing a great job keeping Virginia beautiful. I also want to take a minute to ask you

to push yourselves just a little bit further this spring.

The Virginia Department of Transportation is participating in a multi-agency litter awareness campaign from April 9 through June during which the spotlight will be on the job we all do in fighting the litter problem. In preparation, we're reinvigorating the Adopt-a-Highway program, including giving our residency coordinators – your local contacts – additional training and support.

If your Adopt-a-Highway group can recruit just one more person to join your group, encourage another group to adopt, or do just one more cleanup a year, we can make real improvements in our efforts to keep Virginia's roadsides clean.

You can encourage another group to "try Adopt-a-Highway on for size." We can issue temporary safety permits for groups who want to try one-time pickups without making the full two-year commitment to adopt a stretch of road.

Thank you again for your support of this important effort. State forces alone cannot keep up with the litter problem facing the Commonwealth. We depend on our nearly 7,000 volunteers to get the job done. We couldn't do it without you!

*Philip*

Philip Shucet

## Why I volunteer

The Summerduck Village Ruritan Club is an all-men's club that participates in Adopt-a-Highway. Donna Hamilton thought it a shame that some people in the community were excluded from the club, so in 2000, she started the Summerduck Village Club – a family club open to men, women and children. They adopted Snake Castle Road off of Rt. 651 to Rt. 17. Within a year, the Summerduck Village Club began sponsoring the Somerville Ruri-teen Club as well. Teen members are residents of the Somerville Youth Home, a large farmhouse in southern Fauquier County for displaced or troubled teens. They meet year-round and clean up the stretch of road from the home to Rt. 17, the main highway from Fredericksburg to Warrenton.

She has her hands full, but Hamilton participates in Adopt-a-Highway pickups with both clubs.

**Quote:** "I think the Adopt-a-Highway program is a good lesson, especially for teens," Hamilton said. "I guarantee if they pick up trash one time, they'll never throw anything out the car window again."

**How I help the environment:** "I recycle at home."

**How I spend my spare time:** "I raise and show Bassett Hounds. I also love NASCAR and go to the Daytona race every year."

## Bag it, move it or leave it?

VDOT has a decision matrix for Adopt-a-Highway volunteers to follow when they are not sure what to do about "questionable" roadside debris, such as items that might be too large or dangerous to move or items that might be hazardous or unlawful.

If you've ever wondered what to do with something you've found on the roadside, consult the guide called "Bag it, move it or leave it?" on VDOT's Adopt-a-Highway Web site at [www.VDOT.Virginia.gov](http://www.VDOT.Virginia.gov) to find out whether it is an item you should bag, an item you should move and stack alongside your stacked bags or an item you should leave where you found it. The list is also being made available in the Adopt-a-Highway information package coordinators give to potential new AAH groups.

Space constraints prevent providing the entire list of items here, but some of the dangerous debris to leave in place include:

- Items with a hazardous material label,
- Items that could pose an immediate danger,
- Items that could be crime-scene evidence, and
- Items emitting a strong odor.

Volunteers encountering any of these items should keep a safe distance and call 911.

VDOT borrowed the idea to develop these guidelines from the Caltrans Office of Roadside Maintenance Adopt-a-Highway program.

# Litter Control and Beautification

Here are five easy ways to help Virginia's environment.

## 1. Use natural fertilizer.

Lawns and shrubs help protect the environment by preventing soil erosion and soaking up nutrients before they run off into Virginia waters. The least harmful fertilizer you can use on your lawn is a natural one. By raising the blade setting on your lawn mower and leaving grass trimmings on the lawn, you are creating a natural mulch and fertilizer. Just remember to "cut it high and let it lie."

## 2. Fertilize your lawn sparingly.

If you must use fertilizer, have your soil tested to make sure you plant the right grass, and use the proper type and amount of fertilizer. Follow fertilizer instructions carefully. If you use too much fertilizer, the excess runs off into storm drains and streams that eventually carry fertilizer pollutants to our rivers and bays.

## 3. Reduce runoff from your property.

Fifty percent of the rain that falls in Virginia finds its way into the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers. This runoff picks up fertilizers and toxic chemicals on the way. Slow down runoff by minimizing the number of paved or other nonporous surfaces around your home. Install porous surfaces, such as wooden decks with spaces between the boards, gravel driveways and brick walkways that allow rainwater to drain into the ground and recharge groundwater supplies. Direct gutters and sprinklers away from paved surfaces and onto your grass to reduce runoff into storm drains.

## 4. Control erosion.

Plant trees, shrubs and ground covers to reduce soil erosion and soak up nutrients that could pollute waterways. They will be most effective in reducing erosion if planted as a buffer around your yard or in bare areas. Fill in eroded gullies. To keep shorelines from eroding, plant marsh grasses that absorb wave energy and are more aesthetically pleasing.

## 5. Turn your yard debris into compost.

Yard trimmings account for about 18 percent of America's waste stream. Rather than send your yard debris to the landfill, set it aside to decompose into compost. Leaves, brush and kitchen waste (not meats or fats) can be put in a compost pile and used later to improve the soil in your yard. For more information about how to compost, call your county extension agent or check with your local government or county waste management authority. This is a great project for families and a good science project for students.

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## Adopt-a-Highway brochure revised



VDOT's Adopt-a-Highway brochure has been revised and distributed to area residencies and district offices. The brochure has also been made available to AAH coordinators.

Featuring Amelia County High School Future Farmers of America volunteers, the new brochure provides basic information about how to adopt a highway and where to go for more information. If you'd like to receive copies, please call 1-800-PRIDE-VA, or you may see the brochure on VDOT's Web site at [www.VDOT.Virginia.gov](http://www.VDOT.Virginia.gov)

## Statewide litter campaign kicks off in early April

New life will infuse the Adopt-a-Highway program come this spring when a statewide coordinated litter campaign kicks off and includes significant local litter control and AAH efforts on several fronts.

The campaign will run from April 9 - June 2005. The "kickoff period" will be held April 9 - 24, starting one full week before Historic Garden Week (April 16 -24).

Volunteers and coordinators will see increased news coverage and interest in the program during these three months in particular.

The campaign involves several state agencies and uses the Department of Environmental Quality's "Litter. It Just Isn't Natural." effort to raise awareness of the problem.

The coordinated campaign is the brainchild of the 2004 Virginia Interagency Litter Control Task Force that included representatives from the state offices for transportation, environmental quality, game and inland fisheries, conservation and recreation, forestry, health, state police, and education.

The task force members recognized that no single agency can solve the litter problem and that each agency has a role to play in litter education, prevention, cleanup or enforcement. The task force was charged with achieving greater efficiency with litter control efforts through the integration and leverage of those varied, separate efforts.

It is hoped that the 2005 campaign will lead to expanded efforts in the future.

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# Cleanup Crew Working

## Stories from the Roadside

### Christmas in July

Ottobine United Methodist Church of Rockingham County did a trash pickup on July 17. It may have been a while since their stretch of road had been cleaned. They found a Christmas wreath and stocking.

### Cutting out litter

Alpha Phi Omega of Montgomery County found an empty handsaw box when they conducted their pickup on July 28.

### Singing in the rain

The Showers of Blessing Youth Group did a pickup in Pulaski on April 25. They found two bath towels and a washcloth. Interestingly, the Southern Albemarle Philosophical Society of Albemarle County found a blue shower cap along their stretch of road on March 27. Perhaps the April showers started early last spring.

### Mister, can you spare a bottle?

A group was working in Powhatan County a few weeks ago along Rt. 60 (Anderson Highway) when they saw a man running towards the roadway yelling "Mister, please do not take that!" Once the man arrived at the roadway, the group was told the bottle of whiskey they removed from the edge of the entrance pipe was his. He said he had to keep it out there because his wife would throw it away if she found it.

### Left something behind, did he?

The families of Buck Road in Albemarle County may have won a battle against an especially annoying litterbug. They stated the following on their Oct. 16 pickup report: "The last time we did a trash pick up, we found an area where someone was obviously dumping small bags of trash weekly. After cleaning up the area, my husband, Paul, noticed that someone placed a bag back in that same spot the next week. He put the bag on the side of the road to let whoever it was know we were aware of it. That bag disappeared and that person or persons has stopped dumping their trash there. VICTORY!"

### Laying it all out on the carpet

The Loudoun Valley High School Future Farmers of America found a roll of carpet, a pregnancy test, a five-gallon bucket of drywall nails, and some unopened bottles of beer. Let's roll out the carpet for these litterbugs. They had a lot of nails to bite as they waited for the results of the pregnancy test. Maybe the fact that they didn't have a drink is an indication of the result.



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