

Thousands of volunteers joined coastal cleanup

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PALM CITY — Keep Martin Beautiful's 19th annual International Coastal Cleanup was a great display of the impact that dedicated volunteers are making in Martin County. It is estimated that more than 2,000 volunteers came out on Sept. 20 to remove more than 29,200 pounds of litter and marine debris items from rivers, beaches and waterways in Martin County.

At a time when every little bit counts toward improving the condition of our river, volunteers from civic groups, businesses, families, county personnel, community activists, youth groups, and others all joined together to create trash free seas, cleaning waterways all over the county. The amount of debris has dropped from 41,000 to 29,200 pounds, but there is still a lot of work left to do.

Congressman Patrick Murphy also joined KMB for the annual cleanup, promoting the event on his official Facebook page and noting that "it was great to see so many people giving back to [the] community."

KMB coordinates the local effort as part of a larger initiative involving more than 400,000 people in 90 nations around the world. What makes the International Coastal Cleanup unique is its data collection component. Volunteers record specific types of marine debris they find, allowing the Ocean Conservancy to compile, analyze, and track this data year-by-year. The final information is used to educate the public and in turn, change behaviors that cause the littering problem. KMB believes that understanding the problem is the key to finding long-lasting solutions.

More than 11,400 cigarettes were found among Martin County's beaches and parks, which is 38 percent of the total trash collected. That's an increase from last year when cigarette butts were 25 percent of all the trash collected. Among many other litter and marine debris there were more than 3,550 plastic bottle caps, more than 1,000 plastic bottles and close to 1,000 plastic bags. Top 10 items found were cigarettes, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, straws and stirrers, metal bottle caps, plastic bottles, plastic takeout containers, plastic bags, plastic and foam packaging and plastic lids.

Following hours of working together to make a difference in their community, volunteers gathered at a volunteer appreciation event at Stuart Beach, where close to 500 volunteers enjoyed a family-friendly celebration, including lunch, games and prizes.

Keep Martin Beautiful thanks the generous sponsors and community supporters of the 2014 International Coastal Cleanup, which include American Custom Yachts; AmeriSweeps; Stuart-Jensen Elks Lodge 1870; BioGreen; CAPTEC Engineering; Carson's Tavern; Chapman and Plymale Law, P.A.; Cook Electric; FPL; Frenchy's Crane Service; Friends of Harbor Branch (FAU); Jenkins Landscape Co.; Martin County Solid Waste; NisAir; Olde Florida Realty; Organic Laboratories; Patrick Murphy; Peter's Hardware; Publix; R3 Recycling; Rocky's Ace Hardware; Sailor's Return; Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers; Seacoast National Bank; Southern Eagle Distributing; The Firefly Group; Treasure and Space Coast Radio (94.7 Hot Country); Wallace Nissan; Walmart; Whitticar Boat Works; and Character Counts!, a United Way program in Martin County.

Keep Martin Beautiful (KMB) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community organization founded in 1994 as an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Martin County through litter prevention, the promotion of recycling, improvement of solid waste management practices, and beautification and community revitalization activities. KMB signature events and programs include the annual Environmental Stewardship Awards, the International Coastal Cleanup, the Great American Cleanup, the Adopt-A-Road and Adopt-A-Street programs, and other educational and outreach activities. Find KMB on Facebook at <http://facebook.com/KeepMartinBeautiful>, follow KMB on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/KMBmartin>, visit <http://KeepMartinBeautiful.org> or call 772-781-1222.

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