

Coastal Cleanup in Martin County a resounding success

By Gaylon Parker

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MARTIN COUNTY – Hundreds of volunteers from across the Treasure Coast participated in Saturday's International Coast Cleanup, and many noted that while the trash was confined mainly to a few items the efforts are a necessity during a time when everybody is aware of the fragile condition of the area's beaches and river systems.

The cleanup focused on 13 areas around Martin County, with Jupiter Island to Peck's Lake

being one spot. Also on the list were Jensen Beach to Bob Graham Beach, Stuart Beach, Hobe Sound Beach, Stuart Causeway, Indian Riverside Park in Jensen, Bathtub Beach, The House of Refuge, Tiger Shores and Pendarvis Park in Palm City.

Volunteers were drawn to the event from across the Treasure Coast, including David and Linda Pennington of Port St. Lucie, who showed up to Jensen Beach with the Port St. Lucie Parrotheads Club. The group performs a variety of charity work throughout the area and they said it was a good way to reach out into the community and

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help out.

"When we go to the beach, we take our own garbage bags and all the garbage goes in it when we leave," Mrs. Pennington said. "We only found one can, and the beaches were really pretty clean."

"For a non-smoking beach, we got hundreds and hundreds of cigarette butts out there," Mr. Pennington said. "We got more of those than anything, and the lifeguards just can't keep track of that with all they have to do."

Others from the group were surprised at how clean the beaches were – despite the preponderance of cigarette butts and bottle-caps, but noted that the tourist season hasn't begun quite yet.

An organization called "Live with Grace," which is devoted to the life of Grace Powell who passed away at 13 in 2013, and was a regular participant in charity events. The group of Jensen Beach high-schoolers were

happy to devote their Saturday morning to the effort, which they said is exactly the sort of thing Ms. Powell would have done, despite their needing to prepare for the Jensen Beach High School homecoming dance.

"It was awesome; it's the third year we've done it and it was an activity that Grace would have participated in," said Grace's mother, Karen Powell of Jensen Beach. "After she went to heaven, we tried to find a way to 'Live with Grace' and so we decided to continue to do service in her name."

Grace's friends echoed that sentiment. "It's important to me because my best friend, Grace, passed away a couple of years ago and I think this is the best way to honor her memory because the beach was one of her favorite places to go," said Isabella Luger, 15, also of JBHS, who participated with her friends, Anna Ellis, 16, and Courtland Campo, 16.

"It's whatever we can contribute to the community because everybody goes to the beach and we need to take care of it," Mr. Campo said.

Down at Stuart beach, about 85 volun-



teers retrieved dozens of garbage bags, but they also noted that the amount of trash has steadily decreased in recent years because of efforts like this on the waterways' behalf.

"We had a lot of people and we got more than the last couple of years, but not as much as we have in years past," said Sally Padgett, who works with Bridges Montessori. "We love doing things like this because it's great for the beach, great for awareness

and great for the kids to come out and participate."

To find out more about activities like these, visit www.oceanconservancy.org.

Call Keep Martin Beautiful at (772) 781-1222 or e-mail events@keepmartinbeautiful.com.

For Keep St. Lucie Beautiful, please visit www.cityofpsl.com/kpslb.

Linda and Michael Clase, members of the Port St. Lucie Parrotheads Club, work up and down Jensen Beach on Saturday retrieving items during the International Coastal Cleanup.

Staff photo by Gaylon Parker