

"Oh Beautiful for Spacious Skies...."

The beauty of our nation is an image many Americans hold dear. It is an image of cleanliness, painted buildings, mowed lawns, weed free areas, unblemished vistas, clean rivers and lakes and scenic byways. It is not an image of litter, weeds, debris, un-kept fences, abandoned vehicles, run down or unpainted buildings. The attractiveness of our home, neighborhood, community, State and our country is important to Iowans. "Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain" is the image we strive for and in which we take pride.

This column will appear monthly and focus on efforts, projects and communities that are making significant progress in enhancing the beauty of Iowa. Many of the future articles will identify regions, communities, neighborhoods and individuals that are "making a difference" in improving the quality of our countryside. In essence this will be the "good news" side of the story.

One national organization has moved to the forefront in developing and promoting this concept - Keep America Beautiful. The objectives of Keep America Beautiful are based on those same concepts as epitomized by "Oh beautiful for spacious skies.....". The goals are simple and easily embraced by each one of us:

- Litter Reduction
- Recycling
- Waste Reduction
- Beautification

The national organization of Keep America Beautiful (KAB) is a 48 year old prestigious organization that continues to make significant strides in all of those areas. It is a program that Iowa is embracing. Leadership training, education programs, research and targeted clean up efforts are all key elements and benefits of partnering with KAB.

Keep Iowa Beautiful (KIB) is a charitable non-profit organized by a group of Iowa leaders concerned with the need to enhance the beauty of Iowa and to work to prevent increasing levels of litter. KIB is supported and endorsed by Governor Thomas J. Vilsack. The organization is two years old and growing each year. As Governor Vilsack stated at the initial press session for the organization - "We need to develop zero tolerance to litter in Iowa".

- KIB's objectives mirror those of the national organization but with Iowa leadership and priorities that meet our particular needs and conditions. The key objectives are:
 - Reduce litter levels by 50% in three to four years.
 - Enhance and support statewide and localized beautification efforts.
 - Increase the number of local affiliates (currently three - Keep Scott County Beautiful, Keep Central Iowa Beautiful and Keep Boone County Beautiful).

- Provide background information and research that can be used to measure progress in these areas.
- Provide recognition to those entities and individuals that are "doing the right thing".
- Promote and develop the concept of "litter free" events and communities.
- Support those volunteer programs that are successful.

The objectives are important to each of us. With your pledge to do more to help Keep Iowa Beautiful we can meet these goals.

To obtain additional information on the organization please contact:

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director
Keep Iowa Beautiful
300 East Locust - Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: 515-323-6507
E-mail: gschnepf@keepiowabeautiful.com
Web Page: www.keepiowabeautiful.com

See you in the next column featuring the "Broken Window Theory".

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director