

"Teach A Man To Fish "

The parable generally stated says that “if you give a man a fish he can feed himself for a day – teach a man to fish and he can feed himself for a lifetime”.

Providing the training, guidance and education to “teach” someone to catch or produce food has, without question, far greater value than simply handing someone food or a meal. The same situation occurs with dealing with the beauty of our home, neighborhoods, community and State. Teaching someone to care for the natural and physical beauty of where we live is much easier and beneficial (in the long run) than becoming janitors or custodians and picking up, fixing up, cleaning up or painting up after others.

In one of my previous columns I talked about how we provide training in the wrong way. In fact we encourage littering at athletic events, parades, etc. As spectators we are literally encouraged to throw away items and refuse at those games and events. No receptacles are provided and generally we come to the event with both the knowledge and understanding that someone else will clean it up – normally the school custodians / janitors. That form of expense costs our public schools several million dollars a year in litter clean up efforts.

It is these concepts that led Keep Iowa Beautiful to bring back litter education into the school systems. It has been well over twenty years since any significant litter prevention efforts have been utilized or promoted. This necessitated starting from scratch and developing a new education program. After much research and many meetings the program was developed called the “Litter Free School Campus” program. It provides for both a management option to dealing with litter and also an educational option or both. What it really requires is simply a frame of mind and a school culture that says “we will not put up with littering in our school. We want our schools to be clean and attractive”. Through that idea – pride and respect become commonplace.

Funds were sought to develop a new litter prevention education program. A representative from the Department of Education, a retired school teacher and a retired school principal were recruited to help with the project. Funding was obtained from a variety of sources such as Weyerhaeuser Corp., Prairie Meadows, Casey’s General Stores, along with a major grant from the General Electric Foundation. A draft program was then developed (also utilizing the skills and talents of a game developer and a designer). The resulting product is a highly unique and creative paperless program totally contained on a single CD – that is designed for both school administrators and teachers.

Pilot schools were selected for the 2004 / 5 school year to test out the newly developed educational materials. One of those schools, Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn Community Schools became the first school in Iowa to successfully adopt the program. In addition they were the first school that we know of in Iowa that implemented the concept to encompass the school athletic events during the fall of 2004. Our hats off to the school and to all the staff and students that made it happen. Guess what? The concept of a litter

free athletic event also spreads to the opponent school as they come to a football game that requires the event to be litter free. Both teams and schools become winners regardless of who wins the game.

Additional schools will be selected for continuing testing for the 2005 / 6 school year – let your school officials know about the opportunity. Let's teach our youth not to litter today in order to create a lifetime of benefits to society with a cleaner and more attractive countryside.

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.

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful

Gerald F. Schnepf, Executive Director