

Keep Iowa Beautiful Board Receives GE \$100k Foundation Grant

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Litter prevention efforts receive a boost with a three-year grant for the development of an Iowa K-12 Litter Free School Campus initiative.

The GE Foundation, the philanthropic organization of the General Electric Company, has awarded a three-year \$100,000 grant to Keep Iowa Beautiful for the development and implementation of a comprehensive “Litter Free School Campus” program. The program will focus on the SE Iowa area. The program will also be utilized in other schools throughout the state with an aim to help reduce the \$3.3 million annual litter clean up costs for Iowa public schools.

“This is this kind of partnership that spells a winning program – for General Electric, for the schools, for our youth and for Iowa,” commented Donald F. Lamberti and Robert D. Ray, co-chairs of the Keep Iowa Beautiful program. “In this situation the grant represents the ‘ounce of prevention that will truly be worth a pound of cure’ through education and prevention. Changing behavior patterns to avoid littering will result in savings to everyone as well as increasing the regard that we have for property and one another”

Litter education / prevention efforts have largely been absent from Iowa schools for over 20 years, resulting in increased levels of litter and clean-up costs of \$3.3 million annually. When adding litter cleanup costs for all public property in Iowa including schools, the cost to taxpayers rises to more than \$13.5 million per year. An effective “Litter Free School Campus” program can greatly reduce those costs and educate children about the importance of a litter free community.

“The GE Foundation is pleased to provide this environmental grant to Keep Iowa Beautiful as it undertakes important litter prevention and beautification projects that will address important community issues,” remarked Bob Corcoran, President of the GE Foundation.

With the development and implementation of the Litter Free School Campus program, schools should not only see the reduced maintenance costs, but also gain the additional benefits of increased student pride and respect for property and decreased levels of acts of vandalism, graffiti and property abuse, explained Co-chairs Lamberti and Ray.

The program is based on four sectors in the school system:

- Lower Elementary (K – 2) with the objective of Awareness
- Upper Elementary (3 – 5) with the objective of Exploration
- Middle School (6 – 8) with the objective of Application
- High School (9 – 12) with the objective of Implementation

Keep Iowa Beautiful has been utilizing litter education materials collected from other states and areas to assemble a program designed for Iowa. Two specialists have been assisting in the program development:

The objectives of the program are to:

1. Decrease the litter levels in the school campus,
2. Change behavior patterns toward non-littering, and
3. Increase the levels of pride and respect toward property and other individuals.

During 2004 – pilot schools will be selected for utilization and testing of the materials developed. Based on the results the materials will be adjusted and / or modified where necessary and utilized for an expanded program in the 2005/6 school year.

The GE Foundation, the philanthropic organization of the General Electric Company, invests in initiatives that improve educational opportunity and strengthen community organizations in GE communities around the world. In 2003, the GE Foundation supported projects in 30 countries by providing grants and contributions exceeding \$50 million in the areas of education, the environment, children's development and public policy.

Other sponsors and supporters of the program include Casey's General Stores, EMC, Weyerhaeuser Corp., A & E Dairy, Waste Management and the Keep Iowa Beautiful State Income Tax Check Off.