

UK Employees and Students Help Clean Polluted Stream

By
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LEXINGTON, Ky. (May 26, 2011) — University of Kentucky employees and students offered quite a few helping hands during a clean-up of Wolf Run in Lexington's Cardinal Valley neighborhood April 30. UK's Office of Community Engagement co-sponsored the Great American Cleanup event with several community partners.

The event drew 135 volunteers, who drug 200 bags of trash from the polluted stream. Twenty officers from the [UK Police Department](#) (UKPD) volunteered for the clean-up.

"I don't think any of us were expecting to get shopping carts, tires and mattresses," said UKPD Officer Jon Barefoot. "We found microwaves and VCRs. We found a Mellow Yellow bottle from 1988. I was in kindergarten then."

UKPD Officer Brice Boembeke said it's nothing new to see half of his department turn out for a community service project like the stream clean.

"Our department has a really strong community outreach program," he said. "We're all dedicated to it. We do our best."



Officers Shane Breslin (front) and Michael Pope helped with the recent clean-up of Wolf Run.

Captain Kevin Franklin, who oversees the department's community service work, was raised in the Cardinal Valley neighborhood. He said he remembers fishing in the stream as a child. But over time the stream grew more and more polluted, until most of the fish gave way to the kind of refuse he and his officers removed during the clean-up. Despite the trash, he saw some encouraging signs at Wolf Run.

"I saw fish in the stream today. I saw mollusks – that's a great thing to have in the creek because they're filter feeders," he said. "It makes you feel good because it's not just run-off. It's a living, breathing stream. It might be breathing hard – but it's breathing."

Students from the [UK Spanish Club](#) joined the clean-up not only to help out, but also to practice their Spanish language skills with the Cardinal Valley neighborhood's Hispanic residents.

"They wanted to do something for the community, to get involved," said the club's faculty advisor, Jorge Medina. "They wanted to use their Spanish here, too."

Community Engagement Director Laura Hatfield believes that kind of community involvement is key to a student's complete education.

"That's why community engagement is so important," she said. "For example, it's one thing for Dr. Medina's students to learn language and culture in their Hispanic Studies course; it's another for them to apply what they learn in a community setting. It's in the 'getting to know our neighbors' that we discover what opportunities there are for future, sustainable partnerships that meet the needs of both our community and our students."



Officers Shane Breslin (left) and David Duncan remove a shopping cart from Wolf Run.

Event Chair Peggy Henson, 11th district council member for the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government (LFUCG), was happy to see a big turnout of community volunteers and neighborhood residents. "Our environment is very important," she said. "We have to, as much as we can, get the word out that littering does not cut it. We have to do a better job."

Henson reported after the event that much of the trash from the clean-up will be recycled. This includes 20 pounds of plastic bottles, 20 tires and 45 pounds of batteries.

The event was sponsored by the LFUCG Department of Environmental Quality and Public Works, [Friends of Wolf Run](#), UK's Office of Community Engagement, the Cardinal Valley Neighborhood Association, the [Keep Lexington Beautiful](#) Commission and [Bluegrass PRIDE](#) (Personal Responsibility In a Desirable Environment.)

