

Clean Up Aiken looks to tackle runaway trash

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Trash talk is serious business for Jerry Lang and Kic Young, with heavy emphasis on the tons of beer cans, car parts, fast-food wrappers and liquor bottles that make their way onto Aiken County's roadsides each year.

Young and Lang are co-directors of Clean Up Aiken, an organization described on its website as aiming to "facilitate roadside cleanup campaigns for organizations and individuals through our membership of community volunteers."

"This group is amazing to me," said J. David Jameson, president/CEO of Aiken Chamber of Commerce. "It's being led by two guys that moved to Aiken a couple of years ago and they loved Aiken but ... after they got here, they saw litter

on the roadside, and they thought, 'This is not what we were accustomed to', and through an odd set of circumstances, they met each other, and ... these are volunteers that just decided, 'We want to do something about this.'"

"Something," in its current form, includes having a leadership team with fellow volunteers Claire Stahr, Casey Knapp, Terry Dennis, Sandy Staiger and Christa Turner.

They, in turn, help make arrangements for hundreds of other volunteers to have easy access to the resources needed for roadside trash removal, typically in the course of about two hours on a Saturday morning.

"We'll do everything. All you have to do is show up," Young said, who offers a hypothetical example.

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“If somebody says, ‘We want to clean up four miles, five miles of Wire Road,’ we’ll send one of our action volunteers out. And what they’ll do is, they’ll survey that road and they’ll say, ‘OK, in order to do this road ... in an expedited manner, we’re going to need 15 volunteers.’”

A preliminary survey touches on such things as the severity of the problem, and mapping the mileage and recommending the number and spacing of personnel. “It might be just miscellaneous trash versus a lot of trash,” Lang added.

Clean Up Aiken can also provide a flier and website notification to help stir up volunteer support. “It’s turnkey, so all they have to do is show up at 9, and by 11, they’re out of there, and what we do after that is, we’ll collect all the bags,” Young said.

Collection involves gathering bags to make pickup by Department of Transportation crews easier, to reduce the

chance of trash being re-scattered by weather and wildlife.

“We will go out to any organization. It can be a homeowners group. It can be a corporation. It can be a charity. We don’t care. Just give us the volunteers, and we’ll do the work for you,” Young said.

He said their organization, as of Feb. 2, “has either participated in, organized or facilitated” 42 clean-ups and removed “almost 1,500 bags of trash.”

Top-tier sponsors are Battelle Savannah River Alliance, Aiken Standard, Jury Pest Control and Aiken Saddlery, and other boosters are Trophies Unlimited, Taylor Hyundai, Beverage South and Aiken Motorcycle, among dozens of other organizations and individuals.

Current hopes, Lang said, include a plan to pick up trash on the entire stretch of US 1 – about 15 miles – between Aiken and North Augusta, just in time to make a positive impression on people visiting the Aiken-Augusta area for the Masters.

More information is available at cleanupaiken.org and the group’s Facebook page.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A team of volunteers, supported by Clean Up Aiken, is in gear Jan. 28 to pick up roadside trash at Three Runs Plantation Drive and Colbert Bridge Road.

