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News Release

More than 100 volunteers turn out for Fall Cleanup Day event

39 city properties with open property maintenance cases improved Oct. 14

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (October 18, 2017) — The City of Arkansas City's 2017 Fall Cleanup Day event was a great success, city commissioners learned in a report during their meeting Tuesday night.

An estimated 115 to 120 volunteers showed up Saturday morning at the Wilson Park rotunda to pitch in with the grassroots cleanup event. The City provided them free coffee, donuts and orange juice.

"I am pleased to report that we had a much better than expected turnout for Fall Cleanup Day," said Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson. "We've been planning this for about six months now."

City staff estimated 39 properties with open property maintenance cases were affected positively in some way by this effort. Many of them will have their cases closed after compliance was achieved.

In most cases, this consisted of mowing and cutting weeds, but some trash cleanup also occurred.

"We didn't get complete coverage, but we got in each of these zones and made an impact," Lawson said. "I think if you talk to the (volunteers) or the property owners, you will understand the impact that was made. Now the challenge will be: How do we grow this and ... make it run a little more smoothly?"

The event was marketed as an opportunity for youth groups, civic clubs, churches, and other nonprofit organizations to lend a helping hand to their neighbors and friends in need of some assistance.

Volunteers were assigned to one of six cleanup zones to help to clean up the downtown and main corridors of Arkansas City prior to Arkalalah, as well as to assist property owners who requested help.

They were supplied with trash bags, waiver forms, and maps and routes for their assigned areas.

City staff also provided bottled water to volunteer groups throughout the warm autumn morning.

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At least six trailer loads of brush and limbs were transported to the F Street Limb Disposal and Compost Site for disposal. All but one of the trailers were provided by citizen volunteers, including two people who have benefited from prior volunteer cleanup efforts and wanted to “pay it forward” to others.

Several alleys were cleared of brush under the direction of Combination Inspector Brian Williams.

Electronic waste recycling also was offered Saturday at a drop-off location at the park. Four pickup loads of electronic waste were collected and transported by 31st Century Techsupport for later disposal.

Volunteers who participated include Advanced Cheer Crew, the Arkansas City High School boys soccer team, Cowley College’s ACES and IMPACT programs, several athletic teams at the college, the Cowley County Democrats, the Friends of the Burford, the Girl Scouts, the KAY Clubs at both the high school and middle school, People for People, the Soroptimists of Arkansas City, State Rep. Anita Judd-Jenkins, Tim’s Automotive, United Agency, and many other unaffiliated citizens who just wanted to help.

“If we missed you in these acknowledgements, we apologize,” Lawson said. “We appreciate everyone’s contributions and words cannot express our gratitude to everyone who assisted this effort.”

“I’d sure like to thank all the citizens of Ark City that helped,” said Commissioner Duane Oestmann.

To volunteer for the next citywide cleanup event — likely in April 2018 — call Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson at (620) 441-4415 or send him an email at alawson@arkansascityks.gov.

The City also is tentatively planning to hold a town hall meeting sometime this winter to meet with all those who participated and evaluate areas for improvement in future citywide cleanup initiatives.

“I’m not content — I think we can do a lot more,” Lawson concluded. “I think we can hit these areas a lot more regularly. What can we do with 200 to 300 volunteers and a really organized effort?”

About the Beautification and Tree Advisory Board

Most of the planning for this Fall Cleanup Day event was done by the Arkansas City Beautification and Tree Advisory Board, in conjunction with city staff and several key volunteers.

“We could not have done this without our board members,” Lawson told the City Commission.

Board members are appointed to three-year terms by the mayor and City Commission. There will be at least one vacancy soon on the board and citizens are encouraged to apply for membership.

For those who are interested in learning more about the board’s duties, its next regular meeting will be at noon Oct. 26 in the city manager’s office at City Hall, located at 118 W. Central Ave.

The Beautification and Tree Advisory Board regularly meets at noon on the last Thursday of each month, but the board is likely to change the meeting time to later in the afternoon or evening for 2018.

An application for any City board can be downloaded at <http://bit.ly/AC-app-form> or <http://arkansascityks.gov/Government/Boards/New-Volunteer-Form-Web.pdf>.

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