

Gloucester County Clean Communities Program

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Behind Logan Elementary and Middle Schools are the woods, through which runs a pathway to many students' neighborhoods. Unfortunately, this area quickly becomes infested with litter, old household items, and other junk. Working under a mini-grant from Gloucester County, our Student Council receives work gloves, recycling containers, garbage bags, orange safety vests, pickers, and a scale. We work in small groups for three hours (the time is mandated by the terms of the grant) one spring afternoon to pick up as much trash as possible. We weigh the trash, count the bags, and then dispose of it all in the school's trash area. The area is greatly improved after our efforts.

A few weeks before the event, we complete the mini-grant application and submit it to Gloucester County. Once this has been approved and the date is set, we pick up our tools and supplies from the county office a day or two before. On the day of the event, both Student Council members and the Environmental Science Club work together to collect the debris. The program requires that we record the weight and amount of all trash we collect, and we also take pictures in order to document our collection. Afterwards, Student Council provides pizza and drinks for all participants. All supplies are returned to the county office the next day. Within a few weeks, Gloucester County awards Student Council with a check for \$500.

This program benefits the students, school, and community. First, students are able to see the benefit of "community citizenship" and recognize the advantages of recycling and keeping our neighborhoods clean. Clearly, Student Council derives a direct benefit since we are awarded with a sizeable check, and the grounds adjacent to the school are cleaned. Finally, the wooded area is safer and cleaner for families and children who use the area.

This program is effective at all levels- student, school, and community. The neighboring area has been cleaned by hard-working students, and the woods have been made cleaner and more secure. The money received enables Student Council to engage in further activities. Most importantly, students derive the benefit of realizing the importance of helping our environment. This year, we are planning to ask parents of our Student Council members if they would like to volunteer to participate, as well; an added benefit would be that if we have parent participation, NJEA Pride would contribute funds toward the drinks and pizza.