

Let's Keep America Beautiful

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SOMERSET CO. — April is Keep America Beautiful Month. I know, I know, it isn't news because your teachers and others have been talking about it for weeks.

I suppose that everybody where you live is bustling around to plant trees like they are here where I live.

Supermarkets and businesses are giving away scads of young trees so kids and adults will think about the importance of trees and forests to our daily lives.

But taking care of our country is more than planting trees. And making it a beautiful place to live means each person has some responsibility, whether a kid or an adult.

When we start keeping our country beautiful through prevention of pollution, it's a good start. First of all, don't throw trash and garbage along the roadsides and streambeds. It looks terrible and it pollutes the water and soil if left there.

Besides that, the rats come, the flies come, and then they all have dozens of babies like themselves. Before you know it, these creatures can carry awful diseases to us humans, and sometimes to other animals. So use proper methods of throwing away the stuff you don't want or need.

Lots of kids enjoy fishing in freshwater streams. When I drove along some streams I saw one really nice, clean trout stream. A fisherman was wearing waders so he could go into deeper water and cast his fishing line for a big one.

Later, I saw all kinds of trash near a popular fishing river. It was between the water and the highway and everyone passing could see it.

"Adopt . . ." programs such as "Adopt A Highway," which is used by Boy Scouts, for instance, have groups taking responsibility for regular litter pickup. These programs help America to look beautiful. But why do we continue to litter our roadsides? It makes us work harder when we have to get rid of litter twice instead of once.

Littering is illegal. In Pennsylvania, if you are caught littering you are fined \$300. The state fish commission will also fine persons who throw trash along the rivers and streams in Pennsylvania.

There are loads of ways to make our communities attractive. When we each do something for our own area, together we are helping to keep our country pretty.

Of course, in the spring almost everybody rakes the grass and plants flowers, shrubs, trees, and gardens. All of these look terrific and you can't be too young or too old to learn how it's done.

A good example of kids and adults working together was in a school district that needed a new playground. Ugh, the old one had rusty equipment and hardly looked like a fun place to stay.

So with the help of a grant to purchase the materials, and some community fund-raisers, adults and kids built the "Wooden Kingdom." A high school senior designed the playground during his industrial arts classes and got praised for his super work.

Later, some carpentry construction experts offered to build the playground without pay. Kids

who had study halls in school were allowed to go outside and work with the adults. Even though the kids didn't know all the technical stuff, they had strong muscles and could follow instructions given by the expert builders.

Those kids worked hard and made a terrific contribution to their school and to their community since the playground was for everybody. Things like this are beautiful.

Churches and even cemeteries can look beautiful when people take care of them. Country churches have a way of making me feel nice inside. We should always take care of time. They are part of America and part of the life everywhere.

I have some special treasures just outside my house, even though they are simple things. One is an unusual rock and the other is two evergreen trees.

Rocks and trees are everywhere so why should mine be special? Because the people who gave them to me died later.

My Uncle Clyde was a gentle farmer who loved people and animals. He once dug up two young trees and gave them to me. They are about 15 feet tall now. Each day when I look at them through my kitchen window I have such good memories of him.

He made America beautiful by giving me the trees where birds can build nests and find shelter from the wind.

Aunt Rosella, my mother's sister, once lived in an isolated mountain home. When I was a kid I was scared there at night. After her husband died she moved off the mountain, nearer to other people.

Before her home was sold, she gave me the rock that I always admired. It's shaped with three sides and stands a foot tall. Because it tapers in at the top, it's unusual.

Aunt Rosella died when she got old but I see her pretty rock every day. It makes me happy even though I've never learned where she first found the rock.

Things like special trees and rocks can be part of family traditions.

Anyway, let's work to keep the land and water beautiful. Let's not throw soda cans, bottles, foil, plastic and paper products on the ground so others have to pick them up.

Let's just be more responsible. America belongs to each of us.

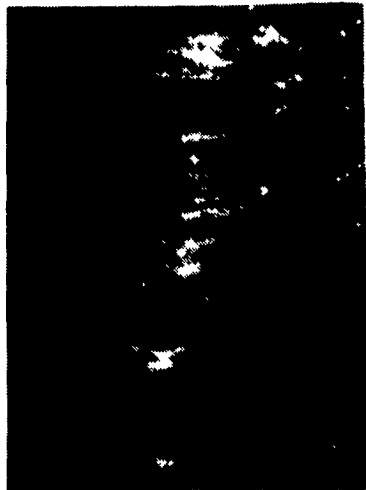
Kids' KOrner



This fisherman has found a clean freshwater stream for trout fishing.



This is not a nice sight. The roadside garbage has a small river running nearby which could be polluted.



A beautiful and unusual rock can be a reminder of somebody special who died.



This Wooden Kingdom playground demonstrates how kids and adults worked together to make their community, school district and America, more beautiful.