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From: David Powers  
Communications Director  
708.358.5781

Contact: Karen Rozmus  
Solid Waste Coordinator  
708.358.5700

Businesses, Volunteers Partner to Help Control Litter

When it comes to litter control, experience has shown that it takes more than one person to get the job done right. That's why the Keep Oak Park Beautiful (KOPB) committee is launching a new program to unite residents, businesses operators and multi-unit residential property managers in partnerships to get rid of litter.

But getting rid of litter isn't just about picking it up from time to time, says Oak Park's Solid Waste Coordinator Karen Rozmus, who also heads Keep Oak Park Beautiful, the local affiliate of the Keep America Beautiful, a national nonprofit public education organization dedicated to reducing litter and encouraging recycling.

"The real key to litter control is prevention, which is exactly what we hope to accomplish through our new partner program," Rozmus explained. "We are enlisting partners who are willing to sign a pledge to keep their property clean and litter free, and properly manage their trash and recycling. We want people who can lead by example and who will actively educate others about the need to properly dispose of garbage."

Residents also can also get involved in the *Keep Oak Park Beautiful Partner Program*, either by volunteering to help in a community clean-up effort or organizing their neighbors into an alley clean-up team. The KOPB committee, a subcommittee of the Village's Environmental and Energy Advisory Commission, will supply an alley clean up kit containing disposable gloves and garbage bags, as well as refuse stickers to help defray the cost of hauling.

The business aspect of the new program is expected to get its first test run in June when volunteers partner with retailers along Roosevelt Road to make a clean sweep of litter on sidewalks along the entire length of the street from Harlem Avenue to Austin Boulevard. The effort on Roosevelt Road then can be a model for other business districts and neighborhoods across the community.

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Litter Program  
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More than just a one-time effort to clean up the streets, this new approach to litter control also is about creating partnerships, according to Loretta Daly, the Village's Business Development manager, who has played a key role in enlisting business support for the new program.

"Forging mutually beneficial partnerships among residents, businesses and even other communities can go a long way toward improving not just the look of a neighborhood, but its vitality," she said. "Picking up litter is one of those seemingly small efforts that can create benefits far greater than just cleaner streets and sidewalks. When people work together, their example can create a true sense of community and generate both social and economic gains."

Daly said the idea of communities working together would be evident when volunteers take to Roosevelt Road in June. By partnering with the Berwyn Development Corporation and the Roosevelt Road Business Association, KOPB will support the efforts of businesses on both sides of the road. While volunteers pick up and bag litter, many businesses will provide refreshments and make their rest rooms available to the workers. Some businesses also have agreed to allow volunteers to deposit their bags of litter in commercial dumpsters along the route.

Rozmus said she hopes Roosevelt Road experience demonstrates to other businesses districts just how much can be achieved when everyone works together. She said she would be out and about throughout the community in the weeks ahead urging businesses and multi-unit building owners and managers to join the partner program by signing a pledge to help keep Oak Park beautiful by not littering.

Anyone interested in participating the in the *Keep Oak Park Beautiful Partner Program* can call Rozmus at 708.358.5700 or email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).

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