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As Elgin starts its annual spring cleaning work, a new Litter League program enlists residents' help in picking up trash

By GLORIA CASAS
ELGIN COURIER-NEWS | APR 09, 2021



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The city of Elgin has launched a new Litter League program to encourage residents to voluntarily pick up trash and debris in areas that need it, like this open lot on the city's east side. (Gloria Casas / The Courier-News)

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It's time for spring cleaning in Elgin.

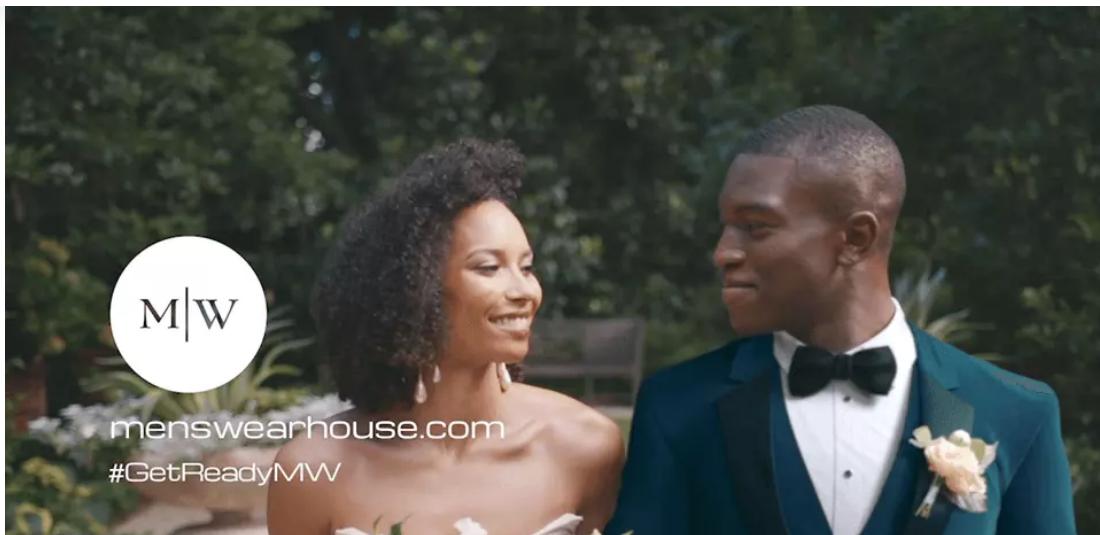
The city's annual cleaning and beautification programs kicked off this week with clearing the right of way on arterial and collector streets of debris and trash. Crews collected 107 bags of trash in one day, Communications Manager Molly Gillespie said.

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Land management, public works and parks and recreation crews from the city collected items like fence parts, bricks, and other bulk items from portions of Big Timber Road, State Street/Route 31 and National Street, Gillespie said.

Last year, crews collected nearly 400 bags of garbage and five trailers full of junk and debris from right-of-way areas, she said.

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Elgin's annual right-of-way cleaning is just one of the programs the city will do this spring. Street sweeping started a few weeks ago and runs through mid-October, she said, and three public works crews will be dedicated to pothole patching through May, Gillespie said. A temporary "cold patch" is used until a "hot patch" is available when asphalt plants open for the season, she said.

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While the city does its part to clean up, Elgin residents have the chance to help out through a new campaign called the Elgin Litter League.

“Litter isn’t always intentional,” Gillespie said. For example, when high wind gusts occur on garbage day, items can be blown from trash bins, she said.

“With limited resources and 38 square miles of city, we hope for the community’s help to keep neighborhoods clean,” she said. “The Elgin Litter League campaign encourages just that. (It’s) similar to the city’s campaign asking residents to ‘Adopt a Drain,’ where they are encouraged to assist with keeping storm drains clear of leaves and debris to help prevent street flooding.”

Its development is a “success story of Elgin 311,” she said. An Elgin resident contacted Elgin 311 with the idea after reading a city newsletter article about Sidewalk Heroes, a collaborative campaign with School District U-46 to encourage sidewalk snow shoveling in the winter.

Participating in the Litter League is simple, Gillespie said. “You can collect litter by yourself or with a group of family, friends or other volunteers. Take a walk around your neighborhood and collect litter,” she said.

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“We have already helped two east side neighborhood groups that have reached out for supplies and help,” she said. “We’ve helped by providing garbage bags, reachers and disposable gloves and offered to collect the bags, too. Those efforts collected

Depending on the need and availability, groups can request assistance from Elgin Allies for large cleanup efforts, she said. That's another city program for those who want to make a difference in the community, she said.

"Elgin Allies are volunteers who work on projects that fit their interests. The program provides the opportunity to engage in your own community, enrich your life, meet others, learn new skills and create memories," Gillespie said.

Residents who want information about either program should contact Elgin 311.

To join a larger clean-up effort, Friends of the Fox River will hold its annual shoreline cleanup at 3 p.m. on Sunday, April 10, in Carpentersville, weather permitting. Volunteers can meet at 39 E. Main St.

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The nonprofit is also joining with state Rep. Anna Moeller, D-Elgin, for two cleanup events on Saturday, April 17. The first is from 9 a.m. to noon on the north side of Gail Borden Public Library, 270 N. Grove Ave., Elgin. The second is from 9:30 a.m. to noon at Trout Park Rivers Edge, Duncan Avenue and Trout Park Boulevard, in Elgin.

Volunteers can sign up at friends of the fox river.org/.

Gloria Casas is a freelance reporter for The Courier-News.

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