

Three Easy Steps

(OK, maybe a few more)

to a Successful River Sweep



FRIENDS OF THE
illinois river

Illinois River
SWEEP

It's Our River Day

*by, Dave Lourie
May 2007*

FRIENDS OF THE
illinois river

Illinois River SWEEP

It's Our River Day

Recently we decided to write a few pages on how to run a successful event like the annual River Sweep to help anyone who might be interested in sponsoring one or anyone who might need a little help tweaking their current event.

Since my background has been marketing for the past “way-too” many years, I am sending you these ideas to use if you want. Remember, that every event is different in size, location, number of participants and length. If you have a few people and gather 6 bags of trash from the shoreline, you have had a very successful River Sweep. If you are lucky enough to have 125 people show up and use 15 boats for 6 hours and fill an industrial size dumpster, you have had a very successful River Sweep. My point is not the size of your event, but did you accomplish what you set out to do? Did you get all of your goals achieved? Spend a few moments looking over the following ideas on how to plan, promote and participate in an event we call River Sweep.

Sincerely,

Dave Lourie
Captain, Peru River Sweep
President, Friends of the Illinois River Board of Directors

Amanda Glover
Co-Captain, Peru River Sweep
Friends of the Illinois River Board of Directors



Three Easy Steps...

The key to any successful event are the 3 P's

1. Planning
2. Promotion
3. Participation

Any time you have any event, especially one the size of a State Wide River Sweep, it is so important to see the big picture of what you are trying to achieve, then scale back to a manageable level that you and a few people can handle. Each and every town that participates in the sweep has one captain and hopefully a co-captain to do the 3 P's. Let's start with planning . . .

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PLANNING

What do you want to achieve at your sweep? Besides the obvious of cleaning the river, you need to cover the basics like how many people would we like, how many boats do we need if any? Will we have food for the volunteers donated from local merchants? Do we have at least drinks available? How about porta-potties? If so, don't forget extra toilet paper and paper towels. River Sweep can be as small or as large as you want. Just remember the larger it gets, the more control you need have over your event or problems and potential disaster could strike. What about supplies other than what is given to you from the organization? Besides the gloves, bags and shirts, here is a list of things you might need the day of sweep.

- Chairs
- Cooking Utensils
- Coolers
- Extension Cords
- First Aid Kits
- Fluorescent Paint
- Food
- Generator
- Grills
- Handi Wipes
- Ice
- Ice Tub
- Off-Bug Spray
- Pens
- Release Forms
- Sign
- Soda
- Tables
- Tents
- Toilet Paper
- Tools
- T-shirts
- Water

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Now of course if you are planning a small sweep and not having any celebration after, no need for food or grills or anything like that. We use this ONLY as a guide to make sure we cover all possible problems BEFORE we go out to the site for the sweep. Make sure you contact local merchants and vendors for donation(s) of any supplies that you don't have. We have included a sample letter to send out ahead of time to ask for those donations. We actually send letters out right after the New Year begins and again as we get closer the actual event. DO NOT forget to send thank you letters (do it the day you receive the donation so you don't forget!!!).

PROMOTION

VERY IMPORTANT. If you are only counting on your immediate family to come help clean the river that day in September, then stop reading now and skip ahead to the next portion of this guide. But in all reality we all need help with the sweep and that's where the volunteers come in.

We all need to get out and spread the word to anyone that will listen. *What we are doing is a real good thing and we should be proud of what we do.* Tell someone what we do.

- Talk to the local high school and rotary clubs.
- Send a letter to local school groups (jr. high, high school and college) that volunteer in the community – some schools even require community service as part of the graduation requirement.
- Go visit the local church group.
- Speak at the next city council or village board meeting.
- Ask the City/Village to give you a proclamation and declare the third Saturday of September as “River Sweep Day” in your town.
- Call the radio stations that people listen too.
- Visit the newspaper and get them to write a story about the need for the sweep and the need for volunteers.
- Make up some flyers and hand them out at the local grocery store or anywhere people gather.

Getting FREE publicity is a trick and to make it easy, we have included a guide for writing the perfect press release. Read it, use it and I promise there is a radio, TV or newspaper outlet that will be willing to interview you and write a story about the great things you are doing in your town the day of Sweep. If you are too shy or need help writing one, call us and we can help!!

Getting Free Publicity - How to Write a Press Release

There is a nasty rumor that press releases don't work. Not true! Press releases can be a fabulous tool for a business promotion ... IF they are properly written and presented.

A problem occurs because most people are not aware of the special requirements of press releases. A press release is not a page-long advertisement. A press release is not a novel. A press release is not a tell-all promotional piece that is full of detail. So what IS a press release

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and how do you write one that will actually get placed? Let's go over a few basics that will help you in your press campaign.

One common error is submitting a press release without first reading the publication. It is virtually impossible to provide timely, news-oriented information to a site or magazine if you have no idea what interests their readers have.

Do a little homework before submitting. Visit the Web and look at the stories the site offers. Buy a copy of the magazine or newspaper and review the common interests of its readers. By understanding what the publication is looking for, you will be able to fulfill the need and thus get a much better response from your press release.

The biggest irritant reporters have is receiving calls from writers asking if the press release was received. Worse yet, asking if it was read. Resist the urge to phone. Once you submit your press release, rest assured you will be contacted if there is an interest.

Just like advertisements, press releases must be placed in strategic areas. Search the Web for outlets to run your release. Also, email your press release to the appropriate person at individual magazines, newspapers and Web sites. Target those that would be read by your customers.

Be sure to find the correct name and email address for the reporter who handles stories related to your business. Releases that are sent to incorrect contacts are most likely thrown away... not forwarded on to someone else.

Keep it short silly (KISS)! Press releases are not meant to tell the whole story. They are meant to give the reporter an idea of what's happening in your business that their readers need to know about. If the journalist would like additional information or would like to arrange for an interview, he/she will call.

Your press release should be approximately 400 words - 500 maximum.

I know all this sounds like a list of nit-picky rules, but not really. Just like with advertising copy, you must give your reader what they need. Write a newsworthy release that meets the criteria of the reporter and his/her subscribers. The time you take to do so will pay off. As you know - when you fill a need, you get results.

NOTE: I am happy to help write a release for you if you need. We have included a sample press release for you to use as a guide. I think that a personalized release is beneficial when you write for your area. I certainly don't think the Peoria paper would appreciate a release designed for Lemont for example. Make those calls to find who in your local media outlet is the "correct contact" for getting results. I am here to help!! Just call (815-252-3597) or email (dlourie@testinc.com) whenever you need me.

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PARTICIPATION

The final stage of getting ready for River Sweep is the participation. Usually the day before the event, we get everything loaded and packed in trucks. We park the trucks and this way we can save time the next morning as we are going to be getting up early for the event. Anytime saved will help the day of the event.

Check and then check again for supplies and materials needed for a successful event. We have a short meeting the day before while packing to make sure we covered all the bases. Believe me, that after years of doing events like River Sweep, there is always one thing we miss the day of the event.

So the big day has arrived, finally!! All the hard work is really done, so enjoy the day as it unfolds. If you have done all the work before the day of the event, the River sweep should pretty much run itself. If you have taken the time to assign tasks to certain people before the volunteers arrive, you should be able to have things set-up in less than one hour.

We put up a large tent and get tables and chairs ready before sunrise!! We have shirts, gloves, and paperwork all ready before the first volunteer shows up.

To have a good time and enjoy yourself, plan your day in advance and think of any possible thing that you need or things that might go wrong. Once the day arrives, there really is not much to be done. If it is not ready by now, plan for it next year!

Make sure as captains and co-captains you make yourself available for any interviews, questions and other things that will pop-up during the day. I highly recommend you do not get in a boat and leave the main area for any length of time to clean yourself. Now of course, walking the shore for a few minutes down river wont hurt, but don't leave or when there are questions you won't be able to be found. Remember, you are the one who is in charge.

Have fun and please don't hesitate to call another captain for any question or guidance you might need.

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Sample Press Release

Localized Press Release Media Release

Mr. Joe Hogan
News Director
WKRP
Phone: 904/822-7495
FAX: 904/822-7393
E-Mail: joehogan@keepmyriverclean.com

July 28, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Annual Illinois River Clean-up Effort

Friends of the Illinois River Sweep

An annual clean-up along the Illinois River and its tributaries on the
third Saturday in September

(Havana, Illinois) - Friends of the Illinois River, an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to conserving, enhancing and promoting the cultural and natural resources of the Illinois River and its watershed is holding its annual Illinois River Sweep on September 17, 2005. Friends of the Illinois River (FOIR) is asking for volunteers to help clean a section of the river from Havana to Grafton. Anyone willing to help can call Jo Skoglund @ 618-252-6987 or email Jo at jskoglund@needfishinglures.com.

The annual river sweep is an event started years ago and has grown over the years and attracts hundreds of volunteers all along the shores of the river. The purpose of the event is to enhance local awareness of issues directly related to the Illinois River along with increase public awareness of the historical, cultural, and natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities along the Illinois River. Some of the other purposes are to protect and enhance native plant and animal communities as well as encourage economic development compatible with the mission statement of the Friends of the Illinois River.

This event needs volunteers to make it a success. September 17, 2005 is not that far off and we need you now to call and help. All volunteers get **free** commemorative t-shirts and protective gloves along with all other items needed to clean the shores of our river. If you can help please call The Friends of the Illinois River at 1-800-riverclean or visit them on the web at www.friendsoftheillinoisriver.org

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Sample January "Before The Event" Donation Letter

April 5, 2007

Home State Bank
Attn: Mr. Bob Donate
PO Box 462
69 1st Street
Anytown, IL 61369

Dear Mr. Donate:

As in years past, another year is upon us and it is time to think about the 7th annual "Friends of the Illinois River Clean-up". This is an annual volunteer effort to beautify the Illinois River area that runs from the I&M canal entrance all the way to the St. Bede beach area; over 7 miles of shoreline is cleaned and restored by picking up trash and litter. This year's event takes place on September 15, 2007.

This annual event is only made possible with the help and donations from people like you. The Friends of the Illinois River is currently looking for donations to be used as refreshments during the event and for the "thank you" picnic that will follow the clean-up. In advance of any donation of food (i.e. hamburgers, hotdogs, buns, condiments), drinks (i.e. sodas, water, coffee, hot chocolate) or napkins, Handi-Wipes and Bug Spray, we thank you. And as always, monetary donations are welcome.

In the seven years the Illinois Valley and all of her volunteer's have been participating in the Friends of the Illinois River Clean-up, we have come to realize it takes more than just the people to clean the shoreline, it takes people behind the scenes who donate not only their time but their services to help make this annual event the success it is. We thank you for your time and consideration and in the mean time we invite you to explore the Friends of the Illinois River's website at

www.friendsoftheillinoisriver.org

Any donations or questions that you may have can be directed to Bob or Joe at WeClean, Inc., 526 Fifth Street, Peru, IL 61354. We can also be contacted at 815-451-8596, Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
Bjones@aol.com

Joe Jast
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
jjast@aol.com

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Sample July "Before The Event" Donation Letter

June 13, 2006

Home State Bank
Attn: Mr. Bob Donate
PO Box 462
69 1st Street
Anytown, IL 61369

Dear Mr. Donate:

Back in January we wrote to you and told you of our efforts for the "Friends of the Illinois River" annual River Sweep. This is an annual volunteer effort to beautify the Illinois River area that runs from the I&M canal entrance all the way to the St. Bede beach area; over 7 miles of shoreline is cleaned and restored by picking up trash and litter. This year's event takes place on September 16, 2006.

This event is only possible with the help of people like you. We are now in need of donations to be used during the event. Any donation of food (i.e. breakfast snacks, fruits, hamburgers, hotdogs, buns, condiments), drinks (i.e. juices, sodas, water, coffee, hot chocolate) or paper plates, napkins, cups or even Handi-Wipes and Bug Spray will be greatly appreciated and will help to make this year's River Sweep a success. Anything you can think of to help with this year's event will be accepted with much gratefulness.

In the five years the Illinois Valley and all of her volunteer's have been cleaning the river we have come to need more than just people to clean the shoreline. That is why we are calling on you now, still early to plan, but yet only three months away to see how we together can gather all the tools our "clean-up volunteers" will need. In advance, we thank you for your time and consideration in our request. All donations should be directed to Bob or Joe at WeClean, Inc. We can also be contacted at 815-555-1234, Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
Bjones@aol.com

Joe Jast
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
jjast@aol.com

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Sample "Before The Event" Thank You Letter

April 19, 2007

Home State Bank
Attn: Mr. Bob Donate
PO Box 462
69 1st Street
Anytown, IL 61369

Dear Mr. Donate:

On behalf of all of us volunteering for the River Sweep and the Friends of the Illinois River, we wanted to take a moment and thank you for your generous donation to help make this years Illinois River Sweep possible. As with any event that requires volunteers and donations, we are not able to plan the Sweep without you. Having you support our efforts truly makes the River Sweep an event we take pride in and look forward to every year. Again, thank you for all your help and support in this worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
Bjones@aol.com

Joe Jast
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
jjast@aol.com

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Sample Volunteer Letter

August 22, 2006

YourTown Jr. High
Attn: Principal Smith
345 Sixth Street
YourTown, IL 61234

Dear Principal Smith:

It is once again time for the Friends of the Illinois River annual River Sweep. This is an annual volunteer effort to beautify the Illinois River and its watershed by picking up trash and litter. This year's River Sweep will be held on Saturday, September 16, 2006.

This event is only possible with the help of people like you. We are currently looking for volunteers to help with the clean-up. All volunteers will be provided with a free t-shirt, work gloves, and trash bags for the cleanup event, as well as lunch following the event. Registration is from 7 – 9 am at the public boat landing on the south side of the river in Peru. If you have any further questions, please contact Bob or Joe at WeClean, Inc., at 815-55-1234, Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Volunteers must be 16 years old, or accompanied by an adult the day of the River Sweep.

We would appreciate it if you could forward this letter to the leader of your community service group(s) and anyone else who would be interested in volunteering. Thank you for your time and consideration in our request. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
Bjones@aol.com

Joe Jast
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
jjast@aol.com

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Sample Proclamation

**We have this presented to us at a formal council meeting. This ensures that the newspaper and radio stations get it out to the public!

MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

ILLINOIS RIVER SWEEP
SEPTEMBER 16, 2006

WHEREAS, the "Illinois River" is one of the most important natural resources in the State of Illinois, and

WHEREAS, the "Illinois River" provides us with incredible economic benefits and recreational opportunities, as well as surrounding us with awe-inspiring beauty; and

WHEREAS, we must do our part to help save and restore the "Illinois River" and take an active role in this cleanup effort to conserve, enhance and promote the cultural and natural resources of the "Illinois River" and its watershed through education and community volunteerism; and

WHEREAS the City of Peru and all its citizens wish to show their appreciation for "Friends of the Illinois River" in protecting the "Illinois River" against contamination.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Donald L. Baker, Mayor of the City of Peru, do hereby recognize the day of September 16, 2006 as "Illinois River Sweep Day" in the City of Peru.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the Seal of the City of Peru, to be affixed.

Dated this 6th day of September, 2006



Donald L. Baker Mayor

Mayor

Judith A. Hense

City Clerk

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Sample "After The Event" Thank You Letter

September 18, 2006

Home State Bank
Attn: Mr. Bob Donate
PO Box 462
69 1st Street
Anytown, IL 61369

Dear Mr. Donate:

The 2006 River Sweep is history – and because of you, it was a tremendous success. On behalf of all of us here at TEST, Inc., we wanted to take a moment and thank you for your generosity. As with any event that requires volunteers and donations, we could not have made it happen without you. Having you support our efforts truly makes the River Sweep an event we can take pride in and look forward to every year. Again, thank you for all your help and support in this worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

Bob Jones
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
Bjones@aol.com

Joe Jast
Anytown River Sweep Co-Captain
jjast@aol.com