

Toss the Trash



*The annual
Community Pride
spring cleanup
helps White
Salmon and
Bingen remain
garbage free*

By Jeanie Senior

How to best describe 13 years of Community Pride, the annual 2½-day spring cleanup in Bingen and White Salmon?

Trash. A lot of trash. Tons of trash. Giant shipping containers filled with stuff, hauled in from

across western Klickitat County.

And thousands and thousands of volunteer hours and thousands of dollars worth of support donations, from food provided for volunteers to donated heavy equipment.

And, reassuringly, an increasing volume that went to be recycled or reused.

At least 100 people worked on the 2008 cleanup, jointly sponsored by the Mt. Adams Chamber of Commerce and Bingen-White Salmon Rotary, according to Chamber of Commerce Manager Marsha Holliston.

“It’s awesome,” says Teunis Wyers. “It’s kind of corny, but it’s

community.”

Teunis is credited with the idea for Community Pride. He suggested it in 1996, when he was on the chamber board, and the aftermath of a huge storm and massive flooding had left the area littered with debris.

There was an overwhelming need to get rid of the branches and other flood debris, not to mention all of the other accumulated junk that was strewn across the community.

The result was the first Community Pride cleanup was announced, along with the location of the site where trash could be brought.

But a surprise awaited volunteers when they arrived at the cleanup site the first day

“10,000 tires arrived in the middle of the night, so that was a real shock,” Teunis says, shaking his head in recollection. “A mountain of tires.”

They were “donated” by an anonymous source, or sources.

“After that, we’ve had security,” he says.

As for the tires, the county stepped up, loading them in trucks and hauling them to a tire recycler.

The cleanup still takes tires, but there is a \$3 recycling charge.

“Tires aren’t our nemesis any more,” Teunis says. “Brush is our nemesis now.”

That is because there is no ready means of recycling brush and yard waste in the county, something he says he is hoping can be rectified.

Otherwise, the majority of items brought in now are sent for recycling, rebuilding or reuse.

“It’s just an amazing confluence of people and little efforts, it’s really morphed through the years,” says Teunis, pleased that the volume headed to the landfill—except for brush—has dropped dramatically. “This year there’s a real critical mass of options.”

One local man rebuilds lawn mowers, tillers and small gas engines. Bikes go to Hood River Valley High School’s bicycle rebuilding program. Second Hand Rose, the Bingen thrift store



Teunis Wyers heads the Community Pride cleanup effort. He is proud that much of what is now brought in is sent for recycling or reuse.

operated by Washington Gorge Action Programs, packed a 20-foot van with stock for the shop. Metal goes to scrap recyclers.

Old appliances that still work will be reused, perhaps in a WGAP shelter; others will be shredded and recycled. Building materials go to the ReBuild-It center in Hood River.

Bingen-based corporation Insitu got involved for the first time this year, offering a place where people could bring computers and other electronic gear for recycling for free. Nine pickup truck loads of computers, keyboards, monitors, televisions and other electronic items—even a couple of record players—were collected, thus diverted from the landfill.

Donated cell phones were set aside for the Cell Phones for Soldiers program.

Volunteers from Insitu staffed the effort from Friday at noon to 4 p.m. on Sunday, coordinated by Lillian Mongeau, Insitu’s Green Lead.

Allied Waste Services, formerly Rabanco, the operator of the landfill near Roosevelt, provided four full-sized shipping containers for trash, and other containers for recyclables such as glass, cardboard and plastic.

The company also provides drivers and fuel, Marsha says.

Klickitat County pays to

advertise the cleanup and John Longfellow, the county’s recycling coordinator, was on site for the weekend. Alan Bennett, owner of a home inspections business, provided the backhoe-loader that packed trash into the containers.

“I think this year went a lot smoother, mainly because we changed the traffic pattern, which reduced the clutter of vehicles waiting for their turn to back up and unload,” Marsha says. “Also, having Second Hand Rose on site (with a van) helped a lot of people to get stuff to them. They normally would have to wait for the store to be open.”

As a bonus, a recycling area at the cleanup site for reusable items without a specific destination are stacked for people to select and take home.

The amount of stuff there, ranging from windsurfing gear to furniture, turned over perhaps five times during the weekend, estimates volunteer Brad Roberts.

Tallying up totals after the weekend was over, Marsha noted the number of old appliances brought in actually declined.

“I think we had less tires, which was a blessing,” she says. “I think we’re getting all the fields out in Snowden cleaned up.” ■