



Girl Scouts welcome spring with local clean-up

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Left, Natalie Rugg, 11, and her sister, Olivia, 9, pick up litter and put it in a trash bag held by their mother, Colette Rugg as they join with other Lyme/Old Lyme Girl Scouts in a springtime clean-up.

This Old Lyme location at the DEP Marine Headquarters - Ferry Landing Park had scouts busy collecting litter near the Connecticut River.

Photo by Deb Beckwith

Most of us associate spring and Girl Scouts with those addictive cookies. But over the past three years in Old Lyme, March has become synonymous with spring clean-up as the Girl Scouts, Brownies, and Daisies, the youngest troopers, fan out around town to pick up trash at public locations.

This year's annual clean-up, a mix of civic duty and environmental education, took place on March 21, and about 75 people, including scouts, siblings, parents, and troop leaders from eight troops, helped out, according to Lori Kolar, adult organizer and Girl Scout mom.

The volunteers picked up all sorts of interesting human debris at seven high foot-traffic areas: public beaches and nature walks, schools, and perimeters of parking areas. This year's sites were White Sands and Griswold Point, the CT DEP Marine Headquarters/Ferry Landing Park, Sound View Beach, Watch Rock, Center School, the rest area on Shoreline Road/Route 156, and the Exit 70 commuter lot.

The troops met up afterward at the Cross Lane Fire Station to compare hauls, do a little hands-on learning, and have fun on a teasingly warm spring day.

"The fishermen around here must be very conscientious," said Joanne Elmoznino, troop leader who helped pick up around the DEP site on the Connecticut River. "We found very little monofilament line scattered on the shoreline."

Most troops collected the usual detritus that threatens coastal wildlife and mars the scenery: glass and plastic bottles, bottle caps, aluminum cans, cigarette filters, fast food clamshells, as well as the errant missing sock and at least one pair of boxer shorts.

"We found a live snake," noted Ann Cote, a third-grader at Center School.

Displays back at Cross Lane helped to reinforce the environmental message. Dawn McCarthy, service unit leader for the Lyme/Old Lyme Girl Scouts, showed the girls how to make rich compost for home gardens from kitchen peelings, coffee grounds, and other organic materials that don't need to take up space in town landfills. The girls also brought in recyclables, from old toner cartridges and cell phones to refundable bottles and cans for recycling.

Dubbed Earth Day, the clean-up is scheduled closer to the first day of spring instead of a weekend around April 22, International Earth Day, which is prime sports practice season. Local Boy Scout troops also have participated in past clean-ups.

Look for more helpful Girl Scouts at the Duck River Garden Club May Market on Friday and Saturday, May 7 and 8, in front of the Old Lyme Shopping Center on Halls Road. The girls will help children pot flowers and vegetable seedlings for Mothers Day gifts.