

River Cleanup a rush for enthusiastic Bruins

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Seniors Grace Billingsley, Madita Hiller, Grace McDaniel, and Connor Ronka walk along the road looking for trash during the River Cleanup. Photo by Sonora Slater.

Dozens of avid student volunteers showed up on the morning of Saturday, September 21st to help with the Annual Key Club River Cleanup, and earn community service hours along the way.

According to Key Club Advisor Jeffrey Carrow, Bear River's Key Club has been participating in the River Cleanup for about seventeen years, but the tradition extends even beyond that—the event is organized by the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL), and this year marked their 22nd consecutive year. The day is part of a state-wide California Coastal Cleanup effort, which has earned a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the largest single volunteer effort in history.



Mr. Carrow described how his role in the event has been modified throughout the years.

“First couple years we were at the Yuba River, and since then they asked if I would be the site coordinator to organize the Dog Bar Bridge over the Bear River, since we’re Bear River High School,” he said. “That’s what I’ve been doing for the last probably 15 years.”

He went on to say that the trash collected has also changed both form and quantity, explaining that while originally, much of the junk collected was bulky and often quite large, it now consists of primarily cigarette butts and take out food containers.

Several Bruins said that unlike Carrow, a veteran of the Cleanup effort, they came this year for the first time.

“This was my first time doing the River Cleanup,” said Senior Connor Ronka. “I had heard tons about the event from classes and friends, so I decided to come try it out since I knew a lot of people going. It’s also a good source for community service hours for Senior Projects.”

Fellow Senior Justin Roberts also mentioned community service hours as a motivator for attending.

“It was my first time and I decided to go because I wanted to help out with community service, which is also a way to get hours in for the Senior Project,” he said.

Mr. Carrow said that often this is an event that draws in new Key Clubbers because it is so close to the beginning of the school year, which is one of the reasons why it’s consistently so well-attended.

“It’s a really good event for the Key Club because it really kicks off the Key Club season with a very organized thing,” he said “ ... It’s at the perfect time of the year to kind of solidify the club. We do our best to get out there with about 25 or 30 kids and get as much of it picked up as we can.”

He also talked about the celebration that takes place afterwards.

“We go to Pioneer Park, which is the third place we’ve been in my career doing this,” Mr. Carrow said. “We were at Memorial Park, Bridgeport for years, and at Pioneer Park for the last three or four years, and they have a barbeque/celebration/contest, and everyone’s there all dirty, and picking up trash all morning.”

According to Mr. Carrow, one of these contests is for “weirdest thing found.” Several Bruins listed strange things they found this year at the river.

“The weirdest thing that the group found was probably a transformer action figure,” said Ronka. “The weirdest thing that my team found was probably a saw.”

“We found many random items that I never would have expected to find just tossed near the road or river,” said Roberts. “I think the weirdest thing I found was an almost complete, small gas barbeque with a bag of bones close to it.”

“I didn’t find anything weird, but there were a few action figures found and a really old TV,” said Maya Thrasher, a sophomore.

Mr. Carrow finished by saying why he has continued to participate in this event for so many years.

“It’s just a really special day to be a part of,” he said.