

# KCB NOVEMBER 2022 MONTHLY



## Letter from the KCB Board

My short history with Keep Cherokee Beautiful begins in 2020 when I first read about the public interest meetings. That October, I strapped on a mask and went to the meeting at the Hickory Flat fire station. As I entered the building, I was welcomed by Benny Carter and Andrew Richard.

Growing up, I loved nature and parks. I've always wanted to keep nature pristine and protect its creatures. For example, when I hike, I always pick up any trash I see. It's part of who I am. In 2019, I started cleaning up my neighborhood and hoped to encourage others, by example, to do the same. I didn't know of any groups in Cherokee County that did cleanups, and I was clueless about where to find them. As an introvert, I wasn't truly sold on joining a group. Before the pandemic, I had become disconnected from my larger community. But after many months of cleaning up my neighborhood, I realized an "army of one" cannot make a lasting impact. Making a larger and lasting impact would mean connecting with others.

There is something about being among like-minded people that makes a person feel at home. At the fire station that October, we were a group of individuals – with a single goal – how to come together to clean up our roadways and parks and preserve the beauty and natural resources in our county. To discuss how we could be caretakers of our beautiful surroundings – of this place that connects us all – even those of us who feel disconnected.

When KCB advertised the first cleanup at Hobgood Park in Spring 2021, I was excited about the possibility of meeting other like-minded people. At the Hobgood Park cleanup, one of the Allatoona Lake Warriors, Megan Topper, spoke and sparked my curiosity with her free spirit. At the 2020 meeting, I met Craig Myers, another Lake Warrior, and at the cleanup of Kellogg Creek Road, I walked alongside Lori Forrester who works for the CCWSA as well as volunteering with Rivers Alive and the Upper Etowah River Alliance. Talking to Lori, I learned about all sorts of projects she is working on.

After one meeting and two cleanups, I felt as if I had stepped through a portal to a different universe of people doing very tangible things to make a difference. Suddenly, I had opportunities to join in

other projects to preserve our natural world. I had gone from being disconnected and alone to being surrounded by friendly people who also care about what I care about. I felt connected.

In 2019, I learned a different way in which we humans are connected, by our trash. When I started cleaning up my neighborhood, I realized just how much garbage starts out in the streets, then enters the storm sewers after heavy rains, and gets washed into the creek and then into the lake. One person's trash becomes everyone's pollution problem.

In joining the Allatoona Lake Warriors, I've learned that they have collected over 1,000 bags of trash per year – 2 years running – and much of this litter comes from storm sewers emptying into the lake from various neighborhoods. I am thankful that through combating this problem, it has brought us all together. I have met and worked with so many kind and fun people these past two years since that initial meeting. One of the most fiercely energetic is Mark Preetorius, president of the board. I also met Denise Poole, from a neighboring subdivision, and we have adopted a section of Hickory Road together. None of these folks are afraid of getting dirty (and smelly) to make Cherokee County brighter and cleaner.

Connection... The pandemic and the resulting supply chain problems showed us in a big way how we are all interconnected for our basic needs. The pandemic also highlighted how vital social connections are for our mental health. We can make these human connections at work, school, or church. We can also make these connections on the roadside or at the lake collecting litter alongside people who want to make a positive change. As Benny Carter said in last month's newsletter, we are just getting started. If you want to work alongside energetic and welcoming people, come and join us. Join a cleanup, Adopt-A-Mile and send us your ideas. Come and get connected.

Lisa Johnson  
Board Member  
Keep Cherokee Beautiful

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## Plastic Bags

Certain items that are recyclable can't be recycled in your bin or cart at home. For example, plastic bags get tangled around gears and machines that sort and process recyclables. Workers must remove them by hand. This costs time and money. Take your plastic bags to a drop-off location and don't place them in your curbside bin. We also accept them at the Cherokee County Recycling Center but they must be separate from other recyclables.

### Do plastic bags harm the environment?

When improperly disposed or not recycled, plastic bags become harmful to the environment as litter. With over one billion plastic bags

used every day, that equates to about 4 bags for every person in the United States per day. The cost to produce such a quantity is enormous and since both natural gas and petroleum are used to produce these bags, their production uses a large amount of nonrenewable resources. Plastic bags can take many years to degrade and may release toxic chemicals into the soil if they are littered. They also can pose a threat to sea turtles and other marine life that mistake the plastic bags for food.

### How can I recycle plastic bags?

Today, only about 3% of plastic bags consumed are being recycled. This is largely due to the limited infrastructure. Few locations take plastic bags for recycling and almost no curbside programs allow plastic bags, however options do exist. For instance, most Kroger, Wal-Mart, and Publix and other grocery stores take plastic bags for recycling at the front of their stores. As an alternative, the stores also sell reusable cloth bags with the store brand on them for around \$1 a piece. So there are options!

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## Adopt-A-Mile Updates

We welcome would like to welcome two new members, Bradshaw & Harmony Friends and Altoona Lake Warriors to the Adopt-A-Mile program!

For Adopt-A-Mile groups, when is your next clean-up? Don't let these wonderful weather weekends slip past. Your roadway and community are counting on you.

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## Backyard Composting Resources

Did you know 40 percent of food in America is wasted? In Georgia, food is the single largest component of material being landfilled. Want to make a difference in reducing food scraps going to landfills? Compost your food scraps, soiled paper, and coffee grounds. Here are several resources to help you compost at home.

[Composting at Home: An Introduction to the Basics](#) This is an informative video to help you get started composting at home that is produced by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance

[Georgia Backyard Composting Brochure](#) This brochure provides basic information to help you get started with composting at home. This is produced by the Georgia Recycling Coalition.

[Backyard Composting Fact Sheet](#) These are tips for successful composting at home produced by the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station.

[Reference Guide for backyard composting and vermicomposting](#) These are resources pertaining to backyard

composting and vermicomposting gathered by the US Composting Council Research Education Foundation.

[Georgia Recycling Coalition \(GRC\) Community-Composting](#) These are composting resources for the public, parents, and teachers.

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## Polystyrene AKA Styrofoam

Most of us know this material by Dow Chemicals' patented name, Styrofoam.

This product is used in so many daily applications sometimes it is difficult to get away from it. From packing material to egg cartons, food trays and drinking cups, you probably use it every day.

Technically, styrofoam is a plastic and its usefulness comes from its ability to be molded, melted, reshaped and then cooled to make solid again. Unfortunately, the chemical makeup which makes this possible is what makes it difficult to recycle.

Currently, there are very few locations that are able to process styrofoam which is due in large part to the specialized machinery and chemicals necessary for the recycling process. In many cases, recycling styrofoam is more expensive than simply making more of it.

The impacts of styrofoam on the environment are mixed. The production of styrofoam is less damaging and resource intensive than creating the same products from paper. Styrofoam actually uses 1/6<sup>th</sup> of all the total production elements of paper-based products and only three percent of the chemical ingredients.

It is estimated that less than one percent of landfill weight is comprised of styrofoam, this doesn't mean there isn't a lot of it, simply means it is extremely lightweight.

Roughly, 99 percent of styrofoam ends up in landfill dumps. Because it can take thousands of years to decompose, it is still not fully known the effects of potentially releasing harmful toxins or carcinogens into the environment.

If you are looking for ways to get rid of styrofoam, many industries and merchants are now offering mail-back recycling programs or even using other materials for packing upon request.

Unfortunately, we are unable to recycle styrofoam at the Cherokee County Recycling Center. We do dispose of it free of charge but it must be bagged. If we can't keep it out of the landfills the least we can do is keep it off the roads and out of the waterways.

Troy Brazie  
Manager  
Cherokee County Recycling Center

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470 Blalock Road, Canton | [www.cherokeega.com/recycling-center/](http://www.cherokeega.com/recycling-center/)