

## **Cleaning Up Wake Forest, One Bag at a Time**

Crumpled beer cans, plastic bottles, and red cups littered the roads leading to Wake Forest—until a group of students decided to take action. Equipped with gloves, trash bags, and grabbers, they weren't just cleaning up the streets; they were making a statement about environmental responsibility and the power of student action.

To reduce the trash along Polo Road and Long Drive, dEaCOfriendly, a student-led organization that promotes sustainability, hosted a community trash pick-up Sunday morning.

The event has become a weekly effort to address the growing issue of waste—particularly alcohol containers and cigarette butts—left behind after weekend parties at nearby fraternities and other social hotspots.

“People think it's easier to just throw it there instead of walking around holding a can, with the possibility of getting in trouble or not being able to find a nearby trash can,” said freshman Sienna White, a member of Chi Omega and a frequent visitor of popular fraternities.

However, “Yes, partying is fun, but a clean earth is more fun,” said senior Christine Turnbull, a regular community service volunteer.

According to Spectrum News, more than 11.5 million pounds of litter were collected across North Carolina in 2023. This waste has contributed to environmental degradation, harm to wildlife, and the financial burden of cleanup efforts. At Wake Forest specifically, accumulated waste lines the roads near a key campus entrance, creating both an environmental concern and a damaging representation of the student body.

“The trash negatively reflects Wake Forest students, our campus culture, and our environmental views since we are trashing public-facing roads,” said junior Olivia Delgado, president of dEaCOfriendly.

Beyond tidying up, the initiative encourages students to take responsibility for their surroundings and rethink their role in campus sustainability. The effort underscores a larger mission: fostering a culture of environmental accountability at Wake Forest.

“We hope that by having our students clean up after themselves, they can practice sustainable behaviors and reflect on the impact we have daily on our community and the environment,” said Delgado.

Five students volunteered for the Sunday morning effort, gathering around two bags of recycling and trash—a consistent amount week to week. For some, participation is rooted in personal values, while others see it as a requirement.

“I’m new. I transferred here this semester, and I’m getting into clubs,” freshman Citlali Camacho said. “When I was in California—it’s a big recycling state—we donate the cans and water bottles we collect, or recycle them for money. I was part of a club like that in high school and my first college, so I decided to stick with it.”

On the other hand, sophomore Ciarra Velazquez adds, “I’m in Education 111. I need to volunteer for an assignment.”

Though the low number of volunteers and their varying levels of interest might be concerning to some, Sunday’s student leader and vice president of dEaCOfriendly, senior Anna Beim, was content with the turnout.

“Most college students don’t want to pick up litter on a Sunday morning, so I’m not bothered if not many people attend,” Beim said. “Since there are only a few streets to cover, having an average of five people coming each week is all we need to make a difference.”

The effort to reduce campus waste is ongoing, and dEaCOfriendly remains committed to the fight for change.

“I hope that through this event, more people start to notice just how often trash accumulates in the environment—and that enough of them care to take action,” said Beim.

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