

Caretakers of the Mighty Mo

About 270 volunteers pulled everything from oil barrels to furniture to appliances out of the Missouri River



Indi Frank, left, carries metal items to be sorted that were recovered Saturday at the Missouri River Relief cleanup at the Noren Access. Stephen Brooks/News Tribune

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The Missouri River is a friend to Adrian Andrei and his daughter Petra, who enjoy spending time together fishing, hunting, hiking, camping and swimming.

“We came to live in Missouri because of its rivers — and its woods, lakes, streams,” Andrei said.

That is why they were among about 270 volunteers who turned out at the Noren Access Saturday morning for the Missouri River Relief event, hosted by the Missouri Stream Team #1875.

“I like helping the environment,” Petra said.

More than an opportunity, Andrei said he felt supporting such cleanup efforts was a duty. And more than encouraging others to participate in the next stream team event, he said he expected people to take part.

“I try to believe we give more than we take,” Andrei said. “This makes us feel good, less guilty.”

“There’s seven billion of us on this planet and look what we’re doing to it.”

From oil barrels, furniture and appliances to aluminum cans, plastic bottles and tires, Saturday’s event definitely helped clean the Missouri River.

That effort is repeated by the Missouri River Relief most weekends from February through October in communities from South Dakota to St. Louis, said Steve Schnarr, event coordinator.

“Our mission is to connect people to the Missouri River through hands-on activities,” Schnarr said.

Saturday volunteers with orange collection sacks were shuttled by boat to various banks to pick up trash. Organizers also made it fun by encouraging people to “find their own buried treasure” in recognition of Talk Like a Pirate Day, said Stream Team member Dyan Pursell of Columbia.

A Git that Garbage Trash Contest also encouraged folks to find unique trash items. What people didn’t take home as “their little trash treasures” was sorted by recyclable material, iron and trash and hauled away.

For several of the volunteers, this may have been the first time they were near the river.

“It changes the way people look at the river when they pick up trash someone has thrown in upstream,” Schnarr said.



Andy and Lesha Neidert bring in a load of trash and recycleables at the cleanup on Saturday. Stephen Brooks/News Tribune

For other volunteers, like members of the Eldon High School Earth Key and Science clubs, keeping Mid-Missouri's outdoors clean is a recurring activity.

The first time Karissa Wieskamp, president of both clubs, went on a river clean up, "I was astounded by so much debris."

After seeing the effects of littering and dumping, Wieskamp returned to her school with a diligence to recycle, pick up trash when she sees it on campus and even confront fellow students when she sees them handle their waste irresponsibly.

"The Missouri River is the source of Jefferson City's drinking water," noted volunteer Ann Detmer, communications manager for Missouri American Water. "It's important to us to do what we can to keep it clean."



The Tiger team takes to the Missouri River Saturday as part of the Missouri River Relief. Sandbars and shores were searched for debris and recyclable materials by volunteers in an effort to keep the river clean. Stephen Brooks/News Tribune

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OUR OPINION

River Clean-up Volunteers Commended

The News Tribune Editorial Staff

A task doesn't need to be appealing to be rewarding.

Slogging through mud while gathering other people's trash might not top the list of enjoyable leisure activities, but that's precisely how a contingent of local volunteers spent a seasonal Saturday.

And, although the quantity of debris may have been discouraging, the 270 volunteers remained cheerful as they toiled.

The Missouri River Relief event launched from the Noren Access in north Jefferson City was hosted by Missouri Stream Team 1875.

Saturday's effort was the most recent

in a series of clean-ups held most weekends from February through October in communities from South Dakota to St. Louis.

Trash retrieved by volunteers was a mixed bag — actually, bags — ranging from the anticipated plastic bottles and aluminum cans to household furnishings and appliances.

Why volunteer for Missouri River Relief duty? Here's what some of the participants said:

- "It changes the way people look at the river when they pick up trash someone has thrown in upstream." — Steve Schnarr, event coordinator.

- "I like helping the environment." — Petra Andrei, volunteer.

- "The Missouri River is the source of Jefferson City's drinking water." — Ann Detmer, volunteer and Missouri American Water communications manager.

Jefferson City is a river community. We have a responsibility to keep the river clean, preferably by not dumping trash in it, but also by cleaning up after people who do.

The efforts of the Stream Team volunteers are richly rewarding — for all of us.