In 2001, it started as an idea.

Gather as many people as you can on the banks of the Missouri River. Stick them in boats, drop them off along the banks of the river, and see how much trash they can get out of there.

It turned out to be a really good idea.

There is no better way to get a bunch of river lovers to work side by side with folks that have never been on the river before. After a few precious weekend hours, you have a pile of trash everyone can feel proud of. Tons of trash pulled from the stream of garbage pulsing down our great river.

As this thing grew up and down the river, a community grew. A community of people that love the river and are beginning to see it in a new way.

Missouri River Relief is a living part of this community. We bring the tools, expertise, knowledge and an undying desire to get the work done.

2011 was our 10th anniversary cleaning up the Big Muddy, and it was our biggest year yet.

The centerpiece of this celebration was the Big Muddy Clean Sweep - a cross-state clean-up by barge. You’ll find out more about this amazing project inside. And we hope you’ll join us in 2012 and beyond.

See you on the River!
What makes River Relief tick...

The River Relief Crew
The MRR volunteer crew is the backbone of our clean-up machine, and these folks dedicate many weekends travelling throughout the valley to get people out on the river. Driving boats, educating volunteers, managing safety, cooking meals... these folks do it all.

River Clean-ups
This is the best way to develop a relationship between people and the river, which is the best way to guarantee we’ll care for our river into the future. Hands-on & on-the-river action.

River Education
From film festivals to our Big Muddy Speaker Series (now held monthly in Kansas City & Rocheport), from student watershed festivals and group river excursions, our education program is designed to increase our community’s knowledge of the river we share through direct experience.

Our Fleet
Boats, trucks, equipment. We added our third trash-hauling plate boat to the mix this year, and by chartering the Living Lands & Waters’ River Cleanup trash barge we leveraged our equipment base into massive results.

Dedicated Sponsors
A diverse group of generous sponsors believes in Missouri River Relief, and their support makes it possible. Individuals, corporations, agencies and municipalities all chip in to turn the props on this clean-up machine.

Amazing Partners
We are nothing without our partners all up and down the river. Agencies, organizations, municipalities, businesses and individual river lovers. They bring the local knowledge to leverage success.

The Hardest Working Volunteers on the River
Volunteers turn our capabilities into results. 2,333 volunteers donated 8,514 hours of labor into our project this year. They removed 83.5 tons of trash from the banks of the Missouri River.

Hands-on - On the River
Missouri River Relief’s Mission is to engage individuals and communities along the river in the exploration, enjoyment, restoration and care of the Missouri River through hands-on, on-the-river stewardship and education events and activities.
2011 at a glance

Big Muddy Clean Sweep
Our biggest project ever. Clean-ups, education and networking across the state of Missouri based on a river cleanup barge. Check out the following page for more on this project.

Education and Outreach
The Missouri River is a huge and complex system, the longest river in North America. We continue to develop our capacity and tools for increasing the knowledge of this river among the people that share it.

Big Muddy Speaker Series
This year we worked with partners to expand our monthly speaker series to Kansas City and Rocheport. Every month we host two presentations on a wide range of Missouri River topics, including river restoration, history, ecology, agriculture and beyond.

Service Learning
Get kids out on the river to clean it up! Through direct experience and a little effort, they walk away with a renewed relationship to the river and more knowledge than they thought they’d gain on a boat trip.

Social Media
Through our website and blogs, we keep our fans up to date on our projects and Missouri River issues. Our new “Big Muddy News” blog posts searchable articles on Missouri River news.

“Upriver” Clean-ups
Spring 2011 was a trip upriver. We spent several weeks working with our local partners on clean-ups in Yankton, the Missouri National Recreation River, Sioux City and Omaha/Council Bluffs.

“Away Teams”
Our “Away Team” program brings our equipment and expertise to help other river organizations with clean-ups they organize. Our away teams helped with clean-ups in St. Louis, Kansas City, Yankton, S.D., Alton, IL, and Paducah, KY.

River Races
Paddle-powered recreation on the Missouri River is taking off. From the Missouri River 340 to the Race to the Dome and Kawivore, we supply our skilled boat crews to provide safety boat support for this growing phenomena. These races are creating a new community of Missouri River lovers with a new perspective on the river.

“This was a perfect example of a quality service learning project. I think the students and the teachers learned a great deal. I hope we can do it again next year.”
- Teresa Regan, principal, Owensville MS
As the keystone event of the 10th anniversary of Missouri River Relief, we embarked on a series of Missouri River clean-ups based on a trash barge. The project was called the Big Muddy Clean Sweep, and it was the largest scale cleanup of trash on the Missouri River ever undertaken.

Working with students, communities, corporations, individual volunteers and partnering organizations, we combined our goals of direct river education with this unique opportunity to remove unprecedented amounts of garbage from a piece of our nation’s longest river.

For more details, see: www.riverrelief.org/updates/entry/big-muddy-clean-sweep/

Big Muddy Clean Sweep — SEPT 10 - NOV 2 — 2011
a cross-state Missouri River Relief cleanup by barge

Mozilla River - Kansas City - Cooper’s Landing - Jefferson City - Mokane - Hermann
New Haven - Washington - St. Charles - St. Louis - Confluence

1473 Volunteers § 60.8 Tons of Trash § 9 Communities § 493 Tires § 5 Messages in Bottles

Photo by Steve Schnarr
Clean Sweep in the News

The story of the Big Muddy Clean Sweep is compelling and visually impressive. Many local reporters visited the barge and attended clean-ups, at times telling our story better than we could.

We have a comprehensive list of links to Clean Sweep stories on our website: www.riverrelief.org/media/entry/big-muddy-clean-sweep-media-clips/

And a great collection of River Relief films, articles, radio shows and more: www.riverrelief.org/media/

Here’s a couple examples, with links to the full articles.

Originally published October 5, 2011, in the Washington Missourian

“We All Live Downstream”

Big Muddy Clean Sweep Will Bring Educational Activities, River Cleanup to Washington Next Week

By Karen Cernich

You may not pay any attention to the trash you see along the roads in your neighborhood or any of the streets around town, but those empty water bottles, soda cans, Styrofoam cups, plastic drinking straws and other bits of plastic that you see lying on the ground, forgotten, are ending up in the Missouri River.

Heavy rains and winds carry the trash from the streets into storm drains and creeks, which then empty into the Missouri River and eventually reach the oceans.

Steve Schnarr, program director with Missouri River Relief, “a grassroots, volunteer and equipment-based organization dedicated to reconnecting people to the Missouri River through hands-on river cleanups and education events,” describes it as “incidental trash,” or in other words, trash left behind by well-meaning people who just weren’t paying attention and are unaware of how their forgotten trash could end up polluting rivers and oceans.

Schnarr has seen plenty of incidental trash over the last 10 years as he and teams of volunteers have hauled ton after ton of trash from the Missouri. Last year alone the group pulled out 592 tons of trash.

Missouri River Relief will be in Washington next week to lead a series of events, including a hands-on educational workshop with local fourth-, fifth- and sixth-graders on Wednesday and Thursday, a fundraising dinner on the barge Thursday evening and a daylong cleanup on Saturday.

A river festival also will be held Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. (See story on 5C.)

It’s all part of the Big Muddy Clean Sweep, the keystone event marking Missouri River Relief’s 10th anniversary this year.

Missouri River Relief has led cleanups in Washington several times before but this time will be a little different. The crew will be arriving by barge.

The River Cleanup towboat will push into town early next week with a sand flat that looks like a giant dumpster, a house barge that features the crew’s quarters and kitchen, and a work flat which is simply a flat work area.

At first glance, the river and its banks may look pretty clean, no trash in sight. But when you begin to notice it.

Because of the flooding earlier this year, much of the trash has been pushed up into the woods along the banks, said Schnarr. During the clean up in Jefferson City last week, a crew found a slew of trash 150 yards into the woods.

Schnarr said he doesn’t usually get upset anymore at seeing all of the incidental trash. He picks it up and works that much harder at educating people about it.

“We definitely see a pattern,” he said. “Below urban areas where streams come into the Missouri River, we will see all of this plastic garbage, mostly general trash that gets washed into storm drains during rain events and end up in the Missouri.”

Not all of the trash comes from such innocent sources, Schnarr realizes. There are definitely people who intentionally dump things into the river — tires, carpet, old broken down refrigerators that would cost them $10 to place in a landfill, used motor oil . . .

“Anything that costs people money to dispose of are things we find in the river,” said Schnarr... (continued)

You can read the full article at: http://bit.ly/washsweep
HERMANN — Dr. Chris Neale, superintendent of the R-1 School District in Hermann, said he’d love to be able to offer more “real world learning experiences” like the Missouri River Relief Learning Festival held last Tuesday and Wednesday in Hermann.

Teresa Ragan, principal at Owensville Middle School, said her only regret was not being able to take all of her students to the day-long festival which include land-based educational programs followed up by the chance to help clean up a section of the river’s shoreline. “I thought it was amazing,” said Ragan. “I wish I could have taken every student with us.”

Instead, the 60 from OMS who participated were involved in real-time skyping exercises where streaming video of their adventures was transmitted back to the school for their classmates to watch. Ragan said teachers and students at OMS viewed them on Smartboards through a “professional friends” Facebook page which educators use.

Owensville High School science instructors transmitted video clips of their activities on Oct. 4 back to the school’s iHigh.com site.

Ragan said the school-wide interdisciplinary unit taught prior to the event was a strong lead-in to the programs offered by local and state agencies such as the Soil and Water Conservation District, FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stream Team, and the Missouri Department of Conservation.

And those land-based programs tied in nicely with the experience students had on the banks of the Missouri River as they had the chance to participate in a “service-based” cleanup along with River Relief staff and project crew members.

The group Ragan was chaperoning was transported a mile up river to a log rack pile by Jodi Pfefferkorn and immediately discovered numerous trees cut down by beavers. Pfefferkorn stopped the group by the stumps and talked about various animals found in the watershed. Later, she took the group for a boat ride into the Loutre River basin where they had the chance to see the infamous Asian Carp in action.

OMS students in a group chaperoned by Kevin Koppelmann managed to catch several of the “flying carp” which landed in the boat and brought them back to school.

Neale, Ragan and Kurt Keller, principal at OHS, all thought the learning stations and “service learning” experience of helping with a cleanup project provided an educational experience beyond what their students could learn from a book.

“They were very professional and interacted well with the students,” said Ragan of the River Relief and agency personnel leading the programs. “This was a perfect example of a quality service learning project. I think the students and the teachers learned a great deal. I hope we can do it again next year.”

Missouri River Relief has moved on down to Washington this week. The group has scheduled a cleanup there on Saturday. The group will push the garbage barge and houseboat to St. Charles the following week and conclude their 6-week “Big Muddy Clean Sweep” with a cleanup on Oct. 29 at the Columbia Bottoms Conservation Area near where the Missouri meets the Mississippi.
Annual Report

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Donations from individuals are an important part of Missouri River Relief’s income. Donations from volunteers and admirers were 1/5 of our funding this year.

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River Relief, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. EIN 03-0425187

photos by Steve Schnarr & Sarah Pennington
This project would be impossible without the generous and dedicated support of our many sponsors.

**$10,000 to $20,000**
- The Boeing Company
- Cargill
- Missouri American Water
- Missouri Department of Conservation
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources
- Pat Jones
- 3M

**$5,000 to $9,999**
- Burns & McDonnell
- Great Rivers Greenway District
- Kansas City Water Services
- Mid-MO Solid Waste Mgmt. Dist.
- Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation
- Patagonia
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Ecological Services Columbia Field Office

**$2,000 to $4,999**
- AEP River Operations
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- Boone Electric Community Trust
- City of St. Charles
- ConAgra Foods
- Confluence Partnership
- Earth Share of Missouri
- Gallup
- Jackson County, MO
- Bryan Johnson
- Patrick & Becky Lynn
- Port Authority of Kansas City
- Race to the Dome
- Rivermiles, LLC
- Union Pacific Railroad
- St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau
- WalMart Stores (Columbia, Kansas City, Owensville)

**Boat Driver partners**
- Missouri Dept. of Conservation (Chillicothe, Jefferson City, St. Louis)
- Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Omaha & Riverlands)
- U.S. Coast Guard (Omaha)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Columbia Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office)

**$500 to $1,999**
- Alton Marketplace Assoc.
- Ameren UE
- Ameristar Casino
- Anheuser-Busch
- Bank of Washington
- Bass Pro Shops
- Briarcliff Development Co.
- Gloria & Michael Attoun-Bauermeister
- Conservation Federation of Missouri
- DeBruce Foundation
- Joe Engeln
- Faultless Starch/Bon Ami
- David Galat
- Jack Holzer
- Kansas City Power & Light
- Kohl's (Washington)
- Lamp, Rynearson & Associates
- Living Lands & Waters
- New Belgium Brewing
- Open Space Council
- Patagonia
- Rotary Club of Washington
- Dave & Fran Stous
- Jan Weaver

**Navigation Industry Partners**
Our Big Muddy Clean Sweep project would have been impossible without the generous and professional donations and services of these companies, agencies and organizations:
- Gateway Dredging
- Hermann Sand & Gravel
- Humboldt Boat Service
- Jefferson City River Terminal
- Living Lands & Waters
- US Army Corps of Engineers

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