

UMD Students Examine Litter and Plan a Rain Garden for Stormwater Run-off

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It All Comes Down to Water: Connecting UMD, Litter, Storm Water and Lake Superior

Senior Nicole Hynum is aware that UMD is connected to Lake Superior. Not only does the campus have spectacular lake views from almost every building, it also has a more direct connection. Water flowing from the UMD campus only takes 5 minutes to reach Lake Superior, carrying pollutants in its path.



Hynum is a member of the UMD Storm Water Steering Committee, and along with about 20 other UMD students, has been involved with UMD's stormwater run-off effort to slow and purify rain water before it leaves the campus. Pictured: Nicole Hynum and Candice Richards.

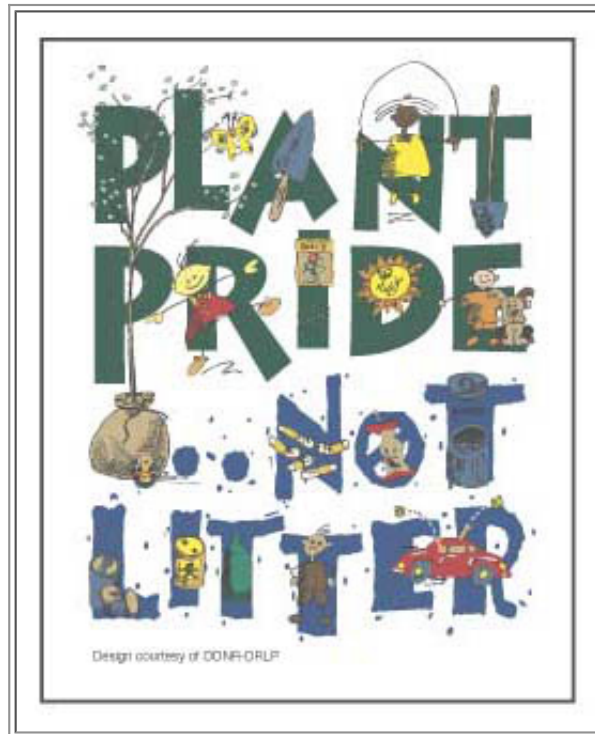
For over a year, Hynum has lead a nine-member subcommittee of UMD faculty, staff and students to examine one facet of the situation, litter. They are trying to figure out why UMD students litter and they will create an educational campaign to hopefully change littering behaviors. "The UMD litter sub-committee is dedicated to raising awareness about the littler problems at UMD and the surrounding watershed," she said.

During Earth Week Clean Up 2004, the group assessed the problem by logging types of litter in various locations. It was a full campus initiative with participation from students, student groups, entire classes, faculty, and staff. The results of the clean up provided important insight into what kind of litter was found, as well as who was doing the



littering. The worst areas were around the large residence halls, in front of the library, and at the entry to Solon Campus Center.

In order to better understand the student population's attitudes toward litter, they asked 390 people selected at random to fill out a survey in exchange for a slice of pizza. They also conducted three focus groups, off-campus residents, on-campus residents, and student group leaders.



The survey and the focus groups provided valuable insight into why students litter, what would help students litter less, and what they think should be done to reduce litter on UMD's campus. "Most of the litter was plastic and glass drink bottles, fast food containers and cigarette butts," said Hynum. "The most common reason for littering was a lack of receptacles." The group heard stories about people walking across

campus, holding messy litter, trying to find somewhere to put it. In addition, respondents, for the most part, did not make the connection between litter and stormwater run-off.

"I was actually shocked to hear another reason students' littered. Many people told us they thought UMD hired staff specifically to clean up the trash." Hynum heard encouraging news as well. "Almost 90 percent of the students we interviewed had participated in a volunteer clean-up project."

Some immediate changes were made to the campus, thanks to committee member John Weiske, Director of Housing, who purchased dumpsters with better covers to prevent properly, disposed of litter from blowing away.

The litter sub-committee's next step was to address all of the respondent's comments. They have developed four proposals to reduce litter on the UMD campus. The first is to introduce more waste receptacles at critical high traffic areas. The second is to hold a one day unit in the freshman Into to College Learning class to address litter and stormwater. Third, the service organization, SERVE has tentatively agreed to

organize a yearly Earth Week clean up and pizza party as one of its yearly initiatives. Finally, they are designing a poster to remind housing residents to help reduce UMD's litter.

This litter education initiative is just one of the Best Management Practices that is part of UMD's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Candice Richards, associate director and Erik Larson, senior engineer are leading the UMD stormwater initiative, through Facilities Management and support Nicole's internship opportunity in collaboration with MN Sea Grant. This summer Facilities Management will construct a rain garden will to collect rain water from a large parking lot and to serve as a demonstration site to the campus and community. The garden will filter and slow the water down before it flows into one of the many streams flowing into Lake Superior. UMD is also a member of the Regional Storm Water Protection Team, a group of 20 communities and agencies working together to protect the Western Lake Superior watershed.

More information at:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/outreach/stormwater/> and
<http://www.lakesuperiorstreams.org/>

Written by Cheryl Riana Reitan and Emily McGuigan. Posted April 19, 2005