

Montgomery County teams with nonprofit to promote roadside cleanup

by Shawn Arrajj

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The nonprofit group Keep Montgomery County Beautiful is planning to launch an initiative to combat roadside litter by gathering volunteers to adopt all public roads in Montgomery County Precinct 2.



“Our goal is to have 100 percent adoption of all public roads by local organizations, individuals or families,” said Charlotte Riser Harris, chair of KMCB. “We want to get to the point where the county litter team has no litter to pick up.”

KMCB will work directly with the Precinct 2 commissioner's office to help locate adopters. The county spends roughly \$40,000 in taxpayer money each year picking up roadside litter in Precinct 2 alone, according to Charlie Riley, operations manager with the commissioner's office.

Roads can be adopted in sections that must be at least two miles long. Harris specified that she is targeting only public roads, as opposed to privately owned roads or roads within subdivisions.

Once a road is adopted, the person or group that adopts it gets their name on a sign posted alongside the road. They assume maintenance responsibilities and are required to pick up litter at least once every three months. Precinct 2 will provide safety vests, clean up supplies and disposal services to adopters.

The group is still in the preliminary stages, Harris said. Having already met with county officials, the next step involves meeting with officials from the Texas Department of Transportation. Then, KMCB will start generating awareness and seeking out individuals or businesses who are interested in adopting roads near them.

Harris plans on enlisting the help of Magnolia West High School students in spreading awareness.

“We want the students to be the ones making presentations to the organizations in our community—rotary clubs, schools, churches—that could potentially adopt a road,” she said. “This will not only work to keep students from becoming litterers, it will also teach them leadership and presentation skills.”

Harris said there were already several area institutions that have expressed interest in adopting a road or hearing a presentation, including the Magnolia Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association, Williams Elementary School, and EnviroCon—an environmentally conscious extermination company.

There are many other benefits to taking better care of roads aside from saving taxpayer money, Harris said. Some of the other perks include general beautification, environmental responsibility and making the area more attractive to businesses and developers.

“When business owners go into areas that are trashed, they think the community isn't taking pride in what they've got,” she said. “Why would anyone want to relocate there?”

While the goal is to get all public roads adopted, the county identified several priority roads: Dobbin Hufsmith, Honea Egypt, Sanders Cemetery and Hardin Store. Priority state roads include FM 1774, FM 1488 and FM 2978.

Residents or organizations interested in hearing a presentation can contact KMCB. Anyone interested in adopting a road can contact the Montgomery County Precinct 2 Commissioner's Office directly at 281-259-6492.