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Milligan volunteers remove downtown Johnson City graffiti

A group of 80 Milligan College student volunteers made a positive mark on downtown Johnson City this weekend by removing graffiti and cleaning up trash on Saturday.

“Since the inception of the Keep Johnson City Beautiful program, this is the largest group of volunteers ever to clean the downtown area,” said Eva Hunter, coordinator of Keep Johnson City Beautiful. “This number of volunteers will allow us to branch out past the historical section of Main Street.”

The students concentrated their clean-up efforts on a four-block radius, bordered by State of Franklin, Market Street, Colonial Way and Commerce Street. The event is coordinated by the Keep Johnson City Beautiful program

and Graffiti Hurts, a grassroots community education program dedicated to raising awareness about the harmful effects of graffiti and vandalism on communities.

“Milligan already has a huge impact on the community in many different areas, but this clean-up event is a way to make a visible difference in just one day of service,” said Shannon Castillo, Milligan’s director of marketing and community outreach. “Businesses, residents and visitors to Johnson City will reap the rewards of this service project.”

In addition to her role at Milligan, Castillo is a downtown business owner and serves as chair of Johnson City’s Graffiti Hurts committee. “I knew this

was an important issue in our community, and I saw a way Milligan could partner to help,” Castillo said.

Castillo pitched her idea to Allison Nauman, an assistant with Milligan’s Institute for Servant Leadership. Nauman oversees Milligan’s LINC (Linking Individuals to the Needs of the Community) Volunteer Center. She also coordinates Milligan’s “Service Saturdays,” a monthly opportunity for students to serve with community organizations.

“We have organizations we typically serve, such as The Melting Pot, but the graffiti abatement project was a completely new idea for us and it’s been very well received by the students,” Nauman said. “I was expecting 15 to 20 people to sign

up and was so excited when we had 80 students interested in helping.”

Hunter was also thrilled when she heard the city would have 80 sets of hands to help clean downtown Johnson City.

“Having a unified effort to continue to improve the overall quality of the downtown benefits businesses, the residents and the community at large,” Hunter said. “I am thrilled with Milligan’s involvement and cooperation during this day of service, and we look forward to a sustained partnership.”

For more information about Graffiti Hurts, contact Shannon Castillo at 943-0530. To learn more about Milligan’s Service Saturdays or LINC, email linc@milligan.edu.

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