

Rouge Rescue

Event is becoming a tradition

By Wayne Peel
staff writer

In a sense, Rouge Rescue '90 is like a wedding — something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.

The something old is the volunteers who will return for the fifth consecutive year.

"I'd say we're building a core of people who are going to keep coming back," said Sharon Sabat, who is coordinating Livonia's cleanup efforts.

Though there had been previous efforts, the Rouge Rescue began as an annual event in 1986. Since then, an estimated 2,000-3,000 people have participated each year.

As for something new, there will be new volunteers — and new sites — for this year's event, Saturday, June 2.

In Birmingham, coordinator Eleanor "Coco" Siewert is hoping that the residents around Quaker Lake will come out to clean up around that Rouge tributary for the first time.

She is further hoping that in addition to the group of workers that traditionally begins at the North Woodward parking lot will be joined by a second group starting from the Birmingham County Club.

"We would come together at Quaker Lake," she said.

"The enthusiasm about the environment is marvelous right now," she encourages anyone from supervised youngsters to senior citizens to join in the clean up either in Birmingham or in Southfield, which has a much bigger piece of the Rouge to tackle.

(For a list of sites of interest to Observer & Eccentric readers, see related story and map.)

Westland, for the first time, is also sponsoring a site and expects to draw new volunteers of its own.

"IT WAS something we felt we should do, something we felt was beneficial for the area," said site coordinator Bruce Getin. Westland's addition brings to 18 the number of cities and townships sponsoring cleanup sites.

Farmington Hills is looking for a new site. Unlike other communities, many of which work the same sites year after year, the Oakland County community sends its volunteers

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where it decides they're needed most.

"What we try to do is pick the worst spot we can find," site coordinator Jean Barrett said.

In addition to the communities, Oakland Community College, the Western Wayne Conservation Association, Holiday Nature Preserve Association and City Management Corp. are among private groups sponsoring sites.

As far as something borrowed, the Rouge Rescue depends upon municipal employees — who will waste into the river to clear log jams and haul out debris in the days leading up to the volunteer cleanup.

Because of Rouge pollution, municipal employees are the only ones authorized to go into the river itself. Volunteers generally carry branches, logs and other debris from the banks of the river to nearby trash bins. Volunteers are encouraged to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots and gloves.

Past finds have been pretty amazing, cleanup coordinators said. Rusted automobiles, motorcycles and refrigerators, as well as tires and a picnic table or two, have been among the items annually dragged from the Rouge.

Lastly, there is the something blue — the clear blue water volunteers hope to someday return to the Rouge, instead of the river's current murky brown coloring.

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Clearing log jams, coordinators said, helps the improve the Rouge's flow and enables the river to rid itself of pollutants.

Rouge restoration turned a major corner in October 1988 with authorization of \$34.7 million in federal grant money for the North Huron Valley/Rouge River "super sewer" project, after 17 years of negotiations between Wayne County and federal government.

THE GIANT sewer line is expected to cut down on the amount of human waste annually dumped into the river.

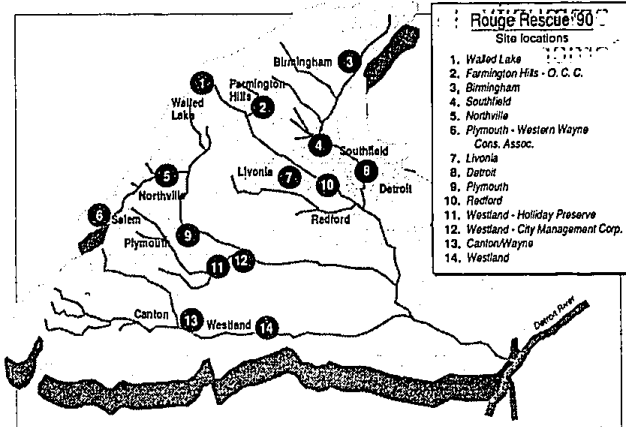
Outmoded combined sewers, some built a half-century or more ago, fill

with storm water during heavy rainfall or with melting snow and ice during the spring thaw. As a result, they overflow and end up dumping sewage into the river.

A 1990 Michigan Department of Natural Resources study indicated that human waste, rather than industrial waste, is the Rouge's chief problem.

The study indicated toxic waste only becomes a problem when the combined sewers overflow.

That study will be discussed in depth at a meeting of the Rouge River Basin Committee June 20.



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Four Rouge cleanup sites cover Oakland

Here are the area sites for Rouge Rescue '90, Saturday, June 2. Registration will be at 8:30 a.m. Cleanup will occur 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at many sites, though some sites might be working later.

Oakland County Sites

● 1. Walled Lake — Mercer Bede home at Pontiac Trail, south on Walled Lake. Call Ralph Smith, 624-4819.

● 2. Oakland Community College — Orchard Ridge Campus, 27055 Orchard Lake road, south of I-696, Farmington Hills. Call Mike Hicks, 471-7515. There will also be a city-sponsored site, call Jean Barrett, 473-9520.

● 3. Birmingham — Parking Lot 8, Woodward, between Maple and Oak. Call Coco Siewert, 646-1800.

● 4. Southfield — Beech Woods Park, southeast of Beech and Nine Mile. Call Pam Riggs, 354-9540.

Western Wayne County Sites

● 5. Northville — Northville Community Recreation Building, 303 W. Main. Call John Anderson, 349-0203.

● 6. Plymouth Township — Western Wayne Conservation Association clubhouse, 6700 Napier. Call Bob Laich or Chuck Van Vleck, 453-9843.

The site is co-sponsored by the association.

● 7. Livonia — At the corner of Pershing & Clarita, west of Inkster, south of 7 Mile. Call Sharon Sabat, 421-2000, Ext. 221.

● 8. Bonita Brook Golf Course — Telegraph Road, southeast of Eight Mile. Call Jack Hendrickson, 538-8393.

● 9. Plymouth — Lions Park, at Burrough and Harding. Call Jim Penn, 453-1234.

● 10. Redford Township — Lola Valley Park, southeast of Kintoch and Lola. Call Karen Hicks, 534-0605. The site is sponsored by township citizens.

● 11. Holiday Nature Preserve — Newburgh Road entrance, north of Warren, in Westland. Call Patrick Kobylarz, 421-8190. The site is sponsored by the Holiday Nature Preserve Association.

● 12. Nankin Mills — At Nankin Mill, Ann Arbor Trail and Hines Drive, Westland. Call Dave Schneider, 567-4700. The site is sponsored by City Management Corp.

● 13. Canton/Wayne — UAW 900 Hall, 38200 Michigan Ave., west of Newburgh, in Wayne. Call Kim Scherschligt, 397-5359.

● 14. Westland — Dorsey Park, north of Michigan Avenue, east of Venoy, south of Dorsey Road. Call Bruce Getin, 728-1770.

Host families needed for exchange students

Area families are needed to open their homes and hearts to visiting teenage students from Spain, Germany and Japan.

The visiting students will arrive in late August and stay for one or two semesters. They are sponsored by the American Institute for Foreign Studies (AIFS) and have enough

money to pay personal expenses, including school lunches.

Host families are expected to provide room and board.

Additional information can be obtained by calling Lynne Levenbach, the AIFS representative in Plymouth, at 453-8582.