

# Rescue workers OCC boosters give Rouge River a face lift



By Mureen Flack  
staff writer

The Rouge seemed anxious for her annual cleanup day to arrive.

Nearly 50 volunteers show up at the riverside Saturday on the Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills for Rouge Rescue '90.

Fred Beattie of West Bloomfield has participated in the cleanup for the past two years. The best rescue technique is "just grab a weapon and do your own thing," he said.

Michelle Smith, 9, and her friend, Tiffany Fura, 10, both of Waterford, were encouraged to joined the cleanup by Smith's aunt, Kathryn Smith of Farmington Hills.

Michelle said she was surprised and discouraged by all the paper beer cans and "junk" in the river. "If

people don't throw trash back in, I think the river could stay clean, but they probably will."

Volunteers began their rescue mission at 8 a.m. along the one-mile strip south of I-696, between Farmington Road and Orchard Lake Road. They fished out logjams and litter.

THE RIVER'S current streamed out as if to gasp for a breath of fresh air when the 23 volunteers and 25 campus workers removed logs and lifted debris that blocked the flow.

While wading, chainsaw in hand, Mike Kadrofske, OCC rescue site coordinator, said he was pleased at the increase in volunteers. The first two years each had 15 volunteers.

"I can't believe how many people showed up this year. This is great," he said.

"I think people are becoming

aware of the need to start working with the environment," said Kadrofske, also the OCC building and grounds superintendent.

Three years ago, there were so many logjams, the river seemed dead, Kadrofske said. "Now it flows pretty steadily."

"I see a lot of growth over the banks that we didn't see before," he added. "But I think you could work on this year 'round and you couldn't get the cleanup to where it should be."

Kadrofske's 6-year-old son, Kevin, said the real reason they clean the river is "so people can go canoeing."

THIS IS the third river cleanup at OCC.

The original Rouge Rescue began five years ago in many communities along the 125-mile watercourse. The

OCC effort followed two years later.

The cleanup is designed to remove debris, logjams and other objects that pile up in the waterway and either block the flow or change its course.

When the river changes its course because of blockage, it erodes the river banks and hampers the river's natural ability to cleanse itself of fecal contaminants.

Many grounds and custodial workers at OCC participated in the cleanup. Although they were paid for their time, they said it's important to help out even if it means taking up a Saturday day off.

Brenda Townsend of Clarkston, Nancy Wright of Oak Park and Donna Donaldson of Pontiac, all OCC custodians, agreed that each year the river looks better.

"We're the ones that have to see it

everyday, so we like to keep it clean," Townsend said.

At the registration desk, John Copeland, OCC buildings and grounds supervisor, said a clean river adds to the beauty of the campus.

"The freer the river flows, the cleaner it gets," Copeland said.

ACTUALLY, the section of the river near OCC is relatively clean, Kadrofske said. Other sections contain industrial pollutants and chemicals dumped along the way.

"I get a lot of homeowners who live along the river and ask me to come out and clean up their portion of the river, too, and I just think to myself, 'Why don't you clean up your portion of the river?'" Kadrofske said.

Debris pulled from the river filled dumpsters supplied by Waste Management of Michigan.



North Farmington High School students Jason Porth and Brian Matley pull junk from the river.



PHOTOS BY SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

At 8 a.m. large tree stumps were removed from the dam, releasing water and debris along the Orchard Community College shore of the Rouge.

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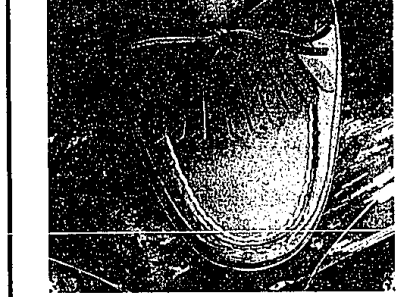
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