

# Litter Obliterators: *Service-Learning Project*

**Description** – Help clean up the Preserves and discover the nature all around you. It’s easy to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. We will help your group choose a site near you and we provide gloves, trash bags, preparation materials, and permit for your cleanup. (**Group Size:** Up to 100; **Time of year:** Early spring thru late fall; **Duration:** 2 hours)

## Pre-visit Preparation

- Review** this entire document and plan your cleanup. These steps are intended to highlight important talking points, but please add your own stories and anecdotes to personalize the experience for your group.
- Discuss** trip preparation information with students and chaperones. Refer to *BE SAFE Procedure; Bag it, Move it, Leave it; Poison Ivy ID*.
- Copy** and hand out *Be Prepared to Get Outside, Get Active, and Give Back* to participants before the trip.
- Locate** your site on a map and obtain directions to the site to share with the bus driver.
- Check** your supply kit:
  - **Count** gloves and bags. You will need one pair of gloves per person and one garbage bag per five teens. Bring extras too. If your group needs additional supplies contact Program Coordinator (cassie.hatzfeld@cookcountyil.gov) at least one week before your trip.
  - **Review** your permit (check the location, date, time, emergency numbers, etc). Be sure to keep it with your supplies and bring it to the cleanup.
  - **Make copies** of the *Preserve Scavenger Hunt*. Bring one copy per three students. (For future trips with returning students, try the *Bird Scavenger Hunt* or create your own.)
  - **Add pens or pencils** to your kit. One per three students will be needed for activities.
- Encourage** students to:
  - **Visit the Forest Preserve District website** ([www.fpdcc.com](http://www.fpdcc.com)) and learn about the **history** (<http://fpdcc.com/about/history>) and **mission** (<http://fpdcc.com/about/mission-vision>) of the FPDCC.
  - **Visit the Teen Service-Learning blog** ([FPDCCteens.blogspot.com](http://FPDCCteens.blogspot.com)) to obtain resources and see what other groups are doing.
  - **Research the Preserve site** your group is visiting and find it on a map.

## Activity Script

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### Introduction

1. **Discuss your first impression of the site.** Who has been to a Forest Preserve before? What did you do there?
2. **Locate** your starting point (typically a grove) at the Preserve site.
3. **Coordinate** with the bus driver on pick up time and exchange cell phone numbers.
4. **Know your location** in case of an emergency and communicate it to all chaperones. Cross-streets or an address will help authorities find your group quickly.
5. **Gather** participants at your meeting place in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. Ask for their **attention** and praise the listeners until you get everyone’s attention. **Welcome** them to the site and remind them that they are there to complete a service activity, Litter Obliterators, and to get outside and enjoy nature. Set a few **rules** for having a safe and enjoyable day. (Ex. Stay with the group and listen when the leaders are giving instructions.)
6. **Getting Started** – Who in the group has visited the Preserves before? What did you do here? Besides recreation, like picnics, hiking, and biking, the Preserves are home to thousands of plants

and animals. One of the goals of the Forest Preserve District is to maintain a healthy habitat for plants and animals. Who/what lives in the Preserves?

**Preserve Scavenger Hunt** – One way to find out what’s in the Preserves is to get out there. We have a *Preserve Scavenger Hunt* to kick off the day.

1. **Establish boundaries and rules of the game.** Explore the Preserve and find items that fit the descriptions on the Scavenger Hunt. Write the items you find on the lines. Do not pick or take the items (leave no trace). If you do not know the items’ names, just describe them. (Ex. medium-sized bird with dark back and red breast. White ring around eye. Or an American robin).  
Reminder – making things up is cheating! You must see, hear, or smell the things you write.
2. **Discuss animal encounters.** Don’t approach any animals. Never touch or pick up an animal. Observe from a safe distance and enjoy!
3. **Discuss poison ivy.** Show the pictures from the *Poison Ivy ID sheet* and remind students to avoid any plants that have three leaves.
4. **Set a time limit and meeting spot.** Give students 15-20 minutes for the hunt.
5. **Organize** students in groups of three and pass out *Preserve Scavenger Hunt* and pens. Establish a group leader and timekeeper. Set them free!
6. **Gather the group** in a circle again. Discuss the results of the *Preserve Scavenger Hunt*. Each person should share something their group found. What was the coolest, weirdest, or most interesting thing you saw? Did your group find something that you did not expect to discover?

**Litter Activity** – You may have noticed on your Scavenger Hunt that, in addition to all of the plants and animals, you found things that do not belong in the Preserves – litter. One of the goals of the Forest Preserve District is to keep the land healthy for wildlife and people.

1. **Discuss what it means to be healthy.** (5-10 minutes)
  - a. How would you define a healthy habitat (*definition of a habitat*: the natural environment of an organism) or natural area? An unhealthy habitat or natural area?
  - b. Why is it important to care for the land and clean up litter?
  - c. Why should we care?
  - d. The two main goals of Litter Obliterators is to make the habitat healthier for people and wildlife and to set a good example for other Preserve users.
  - e. How might our litter cleanup cause a behavior change in other Preserve users? If they see us cleaning up litter, they will realize that someone cares for this land. It might make them think twice about littering and also inspire them to volunteer.
2. **Review *Be Safe Procedures and Bag it, Move it, or Leave it.*** Remind participants that if they don’t know what an item is, don’t touch it and tell an adult. “Don’t know, don’t touch.”
3. **Where will you find the most litter?** Instruct students to focus on areas around parking lots, pavilions or shelters, along the edges of groves and on paths. Groups should stay on paths when possible.
4. **Remind students to look for little things.** Ex. Cigarette butts, bottle caps, pieces of plastic can be very harmful to wildlife. Litter may be hard to find, but with some practice, you will start to see the little things.
5. **When a group has filled a bag,** tie it tightly and place it next to a metal FPDCC garbage can.
6. **Determine a meeting place** and time and boundaries. Plan 30 minutes to 1 hour for the cleanup.
7. **Split up group into teams of six** (combine two Scavenger Hunt groups). Hand out gloves and bags. Give one bag per group to start and tell them they can get extras at the meeting place.

**Reflection** – Discuss the results of your litter cleanup.

1. Was the litter cleanup what you expected? Was there anything you didn’t expect?
2. What type of litter was most prevalent? Why?
3. How did your actions affect the community? Wildlife? Individual participants?
4. What is the importance of the resource being improved?
5. How can we take what we learned from the experience and continue to affect change?
6. If you had to describe your Forest Preserve experience in one word, what would it be?

7. What would you post on Facebook about your experience today?
8. If you were going to text your best friend about your experience today, what would you say?

## Continuation Ideas

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**Take it one step further** and give back at school or in your neighborhood.

1. **Submit** reflections, photos, and/or videos to the Teen Service-Learning blog. Email submissions to the Teen Service-Learning Project Coordinator (cassie.hatzfeld@cookcountyil.gov).
  - **Write.** Tell us about your volunteer experience. Get creative! Write a news article, poem, quote, or give details about your photos. Here are some topics to write about: Where and when did you volunteer? Was this your first visit to a Forest Preserve? What did you do? What was the coolest thing you experienced? What did you expect to find in the Preserves? What did you find? Did anything surprise you?
  - **Take photos.** Show the landscape or the smallest thing you can find. Snap a shot of something hidden or something that was hard to miss. Can you find one thing that represents your site or your service-learning experience?
  - **Share videos.** Submit footage of your workday or interview participants about their experiences in the Preserves.
2. **Take the “One-a-day challenge”** and pledge to pick up one piece of litter each day from your neighborhood or school yard.
3. **Organize a litter cleanup** near your school or in your neighborhood.

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## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS – IL State Learning Standards

State goal	Description
<b>Science</b>	
12.B.4a	Compare physical, ecological, and behavioral factors that influence interactions and interdependence of organisms.
12.B.5a	Analyze and explain biodiversity issues and the causes and effects of extinction.
13.A.4a	Estimate and suggest ways to reduce the degree of risk involved in science activities.
<b>Social Science: Social Systems</b>	
18.B.4	Analyze various forms of institutions (e.g. educational, military, charitable, and governmental).
<b>Social Science: Geography</b>	
17.A.5	Demonstrate how maps, other geographic instruments and technologies are used to solve spatial problems (e.g. land use, ecological concerns).
17.C.5b	Describe the impact of human migrations and increased urbanization on ecosystems.
<b>Social Science: Civics</b>	
14.C.4	Describe the meaning of participatory citizenship (e.g. volunteerism, voting) at all levels of government and society in the United States.
<b>Mathematics</b>	
7.C.4b	Interpret scale drawings and models using maps and blue prints.
<b>Social Emotional Learning Standards</b>	
1B.5b	Evaluate how developing interests and filling useful roles support school and life success.
1C.4b	Apply strategies to overcome obstacles to goal achievement.
2A.4a	Analyze similarities and differences between one's own and other's perspectives.
2A.4b	Use conversation skills to understand others' feelings and perspectives.
2B.5b	Evaluate how advocacy for the rights of others contributions to the common good.
3A.4b	Evaluate how social norms and the expectations of authority influence personal decisions and actions.
3B.5b	Evaluate how responsible decision making affects interpersonal and group relationships.
3C.5a	Work cooperatively with others to plan, implement, and evaluate a project to meet an identified school need.
3C.4b	Plan, implement, and evaluate one's participation in a group effort to contribute to one's local community.