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“The Joys of Littering”

No one needs a dictionary to understand what littering is, people see it every day. There isn't any direct opposition against littering nor an active cry against the problem of littering. Across the 6,525,170,264 people that live in this world, without a doubt that there will be some kind of littering. However, there are no programs, groups or individuals who oppose this, such as there are for non-recycling. No matter what, littering will remain rude, inhumane, and costly.

While the problem of recycling is being dealt with, littering is untouched and probably will be untouched for a long time to come. There is no complicated rocket science behind this deadly issue. It doesn't take an oaf to understand the importance of this. From rural areas to suburbia to large cities, it doesn't matter where it is because littering can pose a threat to any place. Sooner or later, it will eventually become a problem for everyone.

More often than not, people's mind set is concentrated on the fact that, "Oh, our city/town will have street cleaners, garbage men, or any other sources to clean the litter." In schools; children, teens, and college students will think, "Oh, the janitors will clean it up after me." While that is fine and dandy, people don't realize that garbage on the streets piles up, just like eventual debts. I know from personal experience of being a student in high school that my peers often litter and expect the custodians or janitors to clean up after them. Some of my teachers have stopped to scold us that they won't clean up after us because that isn't a part of their job. The funny thing is that we expected and assumed that the custodians would clean our mess. It is our job to take that responsibility and keep our areas clean. If we continue to keep up this sort of ludicrous thinking, then we will need a lot more than a single unit of street cleaners or janitors, which will be consequentially more expensive.

Widely across the United States, companies employ litter pickers to clean litter off the streets. City councils also have to spend taxpayer money on litter removal. Money from fines usually goes to fund litter removal. Road sweeper and beach cleaner machines that are used to clean litter are expensive, noisy, and add to more pollution. Litter may even reduce property value by up to 15%. (Litter. Online. February 2, 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Litter>). As a home owner, you wouldn't want your property to be polluted with waste.

In California alone, statistics show that the government has spent roughly \$41 million dollars on litter removal. Broken down into parts, we spent \$9.8 million dollars on road patrol/pick up, \$13.4 million dollars are sweeping, and \$18 million dollars over litter pick up over 143,000 cubic yards of land. (The High Cost of Litter. Caltrans Maintenance Program. Online. Feb. 2, 2007 <http://www.donttrashcalifornia.info/>). Littering piles up and so will the cost of the maintenance.

Of course the government of California does in some way enforce the law of anti-littering; but it doesn't stop the thousands who inhabit the state from doing it. Fines, if caught in the act, start at \$100 (USD) and eight hours of picking up roadside litter. A defendant's third offense and all subsequent offenses are punished with a minimum penalty of a \$750 fine and 24 hours of litter cleanup (per offense). (Litter. Online. February 2, 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Litter>).

The fine doesn't seem like much of a threat to anyone, because it isn't like the authorities watch everyone's every step, but knowing that your tax payer's money is going to fund these litter removal programs, anyone would be outraged. Parents think, "Why isn't this money going to my child's education!?" In turn, kids wonder why, their parent's tax payer money isn't funding nice and wonderful proms, school dances, cars, sports equipment, and their own college tuition. As far as kids and teens don't really care about taxes and etc, it'll bother them when they realize the snowball effect it creates.

Besides a snowball effect, littering shatters the image of anything that it touches. San Francisco, New York, and Las Vegas are all major cities that are dirtier than you can imagine. From gum, gum wrappers, and plastic bags, to cigarette butts, coffee cups, and eating utensils, it is seen everywhere and anywhere. As spectacular or mesmerizing are the cities, they project disgusting and foul image that turns people away. People can easily describe New York and Las Vegas as dirty, because people do litter without caring about eventual consequences of their actions. As ironic as it may be, that as dirty as these places are people still wish to inhabit these cities. Why? Cities such as San Francisco, Las Vegas and New York are exciting places, where you can feel free and make your dreams come true. It's where life is on the fast track and people want to be on the thrill ride because of this a lot of people go to these places. With that many people in one area, littering will take place. At the Mountain View High School student parking lot, kids congregate during lunch or after school. After 7th period ended and the majority of the students have left for home, I found a pile of litter scattered about everywhere. Take out boxes, food, bags, drinks, etc., were seen about all over the parking lot because of that 6 to 7 seagulls flew all over the place. Seagulls are just really annoying in general. They come for the food that you have left out. So why litter? I am a student at Los Altos High School, and I have never seen my own high school parking lot as dirty as that day in the MVHS parking lot. To me, I feel like the students of Mountain View High are negligent and irresponsible and first and foremost; rude. Don't get me wrong, LAHS is also dirty too, just not as much. People who believe that others don't notice them litter are mistaken. People do see other people litter and will, without hesitation label them uncivil. No matter how good a person is, they'll seem like a rude person if they do it

Besides the costs and looking like a jerk, littering poses big problems down the road. Litter can have many negative effects on the environment . Litter can end up in rivers and canals, polluting the water supply. Animals may get trapped or poisoned with litter in their habitats and potentially spread it to humans, such as a rat biting a person. Vermin and disease s breed in places with high amounts of litter. Open containers, such as paper cups or beverage cans can hold rainwater, providing breeding locations for

mosquitoes which have been known to cause dead diseases such as the West Nile Virus. It also acts as a road hazard and can occasionally contribute to accidents. Adults and adolescents alike don't wish to drink contaminated water or even possibly catch the West Nile Virus, because it can kill you. (Litter. Online. February 2, 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Litter>). In a David Lynch PSA on littering, he cuts and edits shots of rats climbing out of sewers who are reacting to people who litter disgusting things; wet foods, tissue paper, and beer bottles etc. David Lynch emphasizes how engrossing it can become with infestation if littering is not kept to a low. If not, widespread diseases such as AIDS, HIV, or the Bubonic plague could become a reality. (David Lynch's Public Service Announcement. Online. February 1, 2007. <http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZSWv90msTUc>).

With all these things added on top of each other, why would anyone in their right mind litter? Why take the chances of being caught and having to pay a pricy fine? Why cause our beautiful environments to become dirty, ugly, disgusting areas? Why brew potential diseases, bacteria and germs and harm your own and others health? Why rely on others to clean after you? Why waste tax payer's money your parents have to pay that could go towards your dances, sports, and college tuition or just about anything else? Why even look like a jerk? I don't know about anyone, but to me, personally I wouldn't want any of those questions to be answered with a yes. If we can't handle the problem of litter, then wouldn't the easiest solution be to just get rid all of human kind? Of course, that may just be the next step we can only take in the near future.

As trivial as littering may be, it's not hard work to just keep everything clean. To throw garbage away and respectively re-cycle goods won't cause you to break a sweat. In the long run we could have less pollution and have more beauty. We can have less filth and more greenery. Like Smokey the Bear likes to say, "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires", so why not turn that around? "Only You Can Prevent Littering". As hard as others will try to prevent littering, it isn't as good as a person trying to prevent littering themselves. Littering may seem like a pretty self explanatory problem, and that everyone should know they shouldn't litter. They do know people just don't care. People need to care now about littering when there aren't any problems yet, or care later when we have serious problems.