Neighborhood Clean-Up Opportunity
During March, the weather usually gets nicer outside, which may encourage you to be more active outdoors. It is important that you have clean community parks and recreational areas to be active. This month your club can organize a community park clean-up to make sure that children in your community can be safely active outside. Organizing a clean-up is a fun and rewarding experience. If you are organized, you will have a successful clean up.

Where will the clean-up be held?
When selecting a site, make sure that it is accessible, has available restrooms, and has enough trash to make the clean-up worthwhile. Be sure to scout the area first to get an idea of what kind of trash is there. If you are working on private property you will need to ask permission from the landowner. If you are working on public property you will need to ask permission from the town or state agency responsible for the property.

How many volunteers are needed? Where can you find them?
Once you have the time and place for your clean-up, send a press release to all the local papers and community calendars. Check their deadlines and preferred method of receiving a press release. If you need extra people to help with your clean-up, you might want to ask local schools for student volunteers.

What are you going to do with the trash after the clean-up?
Your club should contact local trash or waste haulers and ask if they will donate a dumpster or trash bags. Local business might be willing to let you fill their dumpsters as well. If large pieces of trash are in the area, you will need to contact a specific hauler to help take it away.

What supplies will you need for the clean-up?
You will need gloves and bags for your volunteers. Many local drug stores and discount stores carry both. If you ask early enough, they are often able to donate these supplies. Check with the manager about their charitable donation policy. Consider providing water and some food for the volunteers after the clean-up. Some supermarkets may provide small gift certificates for food. Local restaurants may be willing to support a clean-up as well, especially if it will give them good publicity or if the clean-up are is near their restaurant.

Tee-shirts or water bottles are a nice way to say thank-you to the volunteers. Be sure you have youth sizes if you have a lot of kids helping. Other good ways to say thank you are to offer a walk on the cleaned area by a naturalist, discount cards at local sporting goods stores, and raffles or drawings. However, rewards and prizes are optional.
How can I ensure a smooth clean-up?
On the day of the clean-up, have all volunteers meet in one central location. If you want to make this part of an on-going effort, have everyone sign in with their contact information and ages. Organize them into teams with at least one adult per group. Each group should start in a small area so everyone isn’t overlapping too much. Make sure each person has at least one pair of gloves and a trash bag.

Remind everyone to make note of any medical waste and to leave it alone. Reserve a few strong adults to do the heavy lifting and ask them to help carry any large bags or pieces of trash. Choose a time or signal such as a horn or bell to gather everyone up at a specific time. If you are offering food or a thank-you gift, this would be the time to hand them out. Some people will want follow-up information about the clean-up. You can ask them to note this on a sign-in sheet or let them know if local media is covering the event.

What needs to be done after the clean-up?
Write a short follow-up report that includes where and when the clean-up occurred, a list of groups that participated, the number of volunteers who participated, and how much trash was picked up (measure in terms of tons, pounds, or dumpsters). Be prepared to recognize contributions with thank you notes. Every business needs a thank you note as well as each group that helped. Include a copy in your final report. Send a final report to all the local newspapers. If you have pictures from the event, you might want to send those as well. This will help you get support for your next clean-up. Refer to the 4-H Journalism project for assistance with publicity.

What are good places to ask for funding or support for a clean-up?
Local community foundations are often a good place to start to ask for funding. They have specific deadlines and often have long application processes, so start very early. The local Chamber of Commerce and other business groups may have funding available to support local projects. Discount department stores and drug stores, especially locally owned stores, are often good resources for supplies and funding. Ask the manager to explain their store’s charitable donation policy. You will increase your chances of getting support if you follow their procedures.

Source: [www.happynews.com](http://www.happynews.com)