

Community Clean-Up: Prairie View A&M Students Give Back

Wednesday, September 27, 2006



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Sponsored by the university's office of institutional relations and public service, the PAW Community Clean-Up is a service-learning experience that seeks to engage students and faculty. Service-learning not only provides community service, but allows faculty members to actively participate with students in an effort to educate students while providing service.

"Having our students engage in this service-learning project helps ensure that they will graduate and become productive contributors to their respective communities. We are overwhelmed with the student and faculty turn-out this year. Our goal is for each student to have a service-learning experience before they graduate," stated Laurretta F. Byars, vice-president for institutional relations and public service.

This year's PAW Community Clean-Up not only gave Prairie View A&M students the opportunity to engage in a service-learning project, but it actually started the university's official PVAMU Bayou Clean-Up Project. Spearheaded by university professors Barry Norwood, Dr. Kishwar Joonas and Dr. Nelson Daniels, the PVAMU Bayou Clean-Up Project involves the reshaping and design of a bayou situated near the university's campus. The goal is to ultimately construct and maintain a linear park that will start at the east boundary of the City of Prairie View, loop around, and then eventually end in the northern boundary of the university's campus.

Plans for the Bayou clean-up also include a walking and biking trail where members of the university's community can interact, relax and become educated about the wildlife and plants unique to the area. Ideally, the bayou near the university will be the center for tourism and recreation in the community. To help make the vision a reality during the clean-up project, PAW participants planted roses, crape myrtles trees and assisted university faculty members from the School of Architecture with the lay out of mulch, grass and rocks. The total project will be over three miles in length. The unneeded content from the project ultimately filled five twenty-five yard commercial size dumpsters.

Prairie View Mayor Frank Jackson, adds to the lore of the project, by saying that “the Native Americans that settled in the Brazos valley called this place the arms of god...therefore this project will create the arms that will tie the university and the city together.”

Besides interacting with citizens in neighborhoods around the community, many students were able to learn about the historic slave cemetery in Prairie View, Texas. Historian Dr. W.W. Jones with project R.E.S.P.E.C.T., supervised student volunteers as they continued the clearing and preservation of the slave cemetery from the Kirby plantation. The earliest marked grave in the cemetery is dated 1882, but there are many more plots that date back prior to 1865, the year when slaves in Texas were informed about the Emancipation Proclamation.

“The citizens of Prairie View are very appreciative of the work that was completed for the community. It made us feel like one family,” said Jackson.

The PAW Panthers At Work (PAW) Annual Community Clean-Up project is a service-learning activity that fulfills a major thrust of the university--Service. Service to the community is a key factor that united Prairie View A&M students with members of the community. Throughout the school year, the university will continue to sponsor community service and service-learning projects throughout the year.

About Prairie View A&M University:

Founded in 1876, Prairie View A&M University is the second oldest public institution of higher education in Texas. With an established reputation for producing engineers, nurses and educators, PVAMU offers baccalaureate degrees in 50 academic majors, 37 master's degrees and four doctoral degree programs through nine colleges and schools. A member of the Texas A&M University System, the university is dedicated to fulfilling its land-grant mission of achieving excellence in teaching, research and service. During the university's 130-year history, nearly 48,000 academic degrees have been awarded. For more information regarding PVAMU, visit www.pvamu.edu.



Prairie View A&M student helps clean-up during the 2006 Panthers At Work (PAW) Community Clean-Up. 2006 **Photo:**
Courtesy of *The Panther* Newspaper.



Prairie View A&M faculty and students engage in service-learning while working to beautify the bayou near the university's campus. 2006 **Photo:** PVAMU School of Architecture.



Panthers At Work (PAW) participants pose with Waller County resident. 2006
Photo: Claudia Munoz.



Prairie View A&M students pick-up trash during the 2006 Panthers At Work (PAW) Community Clean-Up. 2006 **Photo:** Courtesy of *The Panther Newspaper*.