

## Keep Collier Beautiful - Adopt-a-Canal Program

Keep Collier Beautiful, Inc. (KCB) requested and received funding from the South Florida Water Management District's Big Cypress Basin to help establish Florida's first Adopt-a-Canal program.

Litter pollution in our county's canals is a growing and potentially hazardous problem. Wind, traffic, animals and water carry litter often far from its original source. It moves until it is trapped by our waterways, curbs, buildings, fences or some other obstacle. In our canals, litter can restrict water flow, pollute the water with unhealthy chemicals, trap or otherwise harm wildlife, provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes and damage canal structures and equipment.

For the businesses and neighborhoods along littered canals, the apparent lack of concern and loss of local pride results in a negative impact on property values.

The Adopt-a-Canal program is designed to recruit volunteer groups to regularly cleanup and beautify selected canals in Collier County. In recognition of their efforts, a sign is placed directly below the canal's Big Cypress Basin sign giving recognition to the group and reminding people to not litter. If desired by the volunteers, the program offers an installation ceremony and publicity at the time the signs are installed. Along with canal adoptions, neighborhoods with large swales will be included in the program. Utilizing the Big Cypress Basin's "Know the Flow Program" and "Xeriscape Guide" along with the cooperation of the Big Cypress Basin Public Awareness Program, KCB proposes to target the county's canal system with an effort promoting litter abatement and beautification.

The groups will be supplied with orange safety vests, gloves, long-handled dip nets, long-handled litter "grabbers" and garbage bags. Each group is asked to sign an agreement to adopt their canal for two years. They are expected to do a cleanup at least six times during the year including participation in the two countywide cleanups (The Great American Cleanup/Bay Days in April and Coastal Cleanup in September). Temporary signs are placed during cleanups identifying the group as an Adopt-a-Canal group with "Volunteers at Work". Canals along heavily traveled roadways, near neighborhood entrances or parks will be considered for xeriscaping.

Prior to and after each cleanup, the volunteer group will contact KCB with a report of dates and times of their cleanup, number of volunteers, number of garbage bags and type of large or unusual trash found. KCB will maintain a record of these Adopt-a-Canal statistics.