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Honors Student Association continues Big Sweep tradition



Photos by Lisa Martinat

By Sthefany Flores

The Gardner-Webb Honors Student Association (HSA) participated in its annual Big Sweep retreat September 8-10.

According to Dr. Tom Jones, professor of biology and associate dean of the Honors program, “We found less waste than the last few years and I think that’s a good thing.”

He explained that the Honors program has been cleaning a section of the New River in West Jefferson, North Carolina since 2001. However, when GWU first participated in Big Sweep, it was a joint effort between the Honors program and the Department of Natural Sciences in 1989.



Jones said, “When we first came, there were about 27 students and faculty attending. This year there were 158 volunteers and 72 students and faculty from GWU.”

He said that there are many benefits to Big Sweep, one of which is the bonding that occurs on the trip. “We have gotten so large that we have four University 111 classes so a lot of [the students] get to meet each other here.”

He continued, “[Big Sweep] is also a very good introduction to Pro Deo et Humanitate (for God and humanity)—and it’s not thankless. They appreciate what volunteers do. I think that service learning is important. It’s good for

students to see how student leadership develops and you want to see what skills they have and how they can be utilized.”

Meanwhile, according to students, there are also other qualities they enjoy through their participation in Big Sweep. GWU Alumni Chelsea Cutler (’12) and Amy Snyder (’13), both visited the campsite where the HSA was stationed.

Cutler said: “Big Sweep is about learning how to get out of [your] comfort zone, how to rely on other people, how to work as a team and to just try something new. I think every year there are more and more people who have never camped, never made campsite burritos, and [those] things are just becoming lost with how much we stay inside.”

Snyder added: “I think the relationships that you build are very important. You get to know a person really well when you are all sharing a tent together, or when you flip them out of the canoe on accident!”

The new generation of Honors students also seems to share the same sentiments. According to freshman Austin Hughes: “I would love to return to Big Sweep again. I feel like every chance that I get to participate in there would be more of a chance for me to learn and grow as a person.”

Although the HSA did not receive an exact weight of what they cleared out the river, they found several large bits of litter. They picked up 13 tires—including a tractor tire— a tarp, a gutter, and several bottles, cans and other waste.

View all photos [here](#)

For more information about the Honors Student Association, contact Dr. Tom Jones (tjones@gardner-webb.edu) or President Hayden Corley (hcorley@gardner-webb.edu)