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### **GWU Honors Students Participate in NC Big Sweep**

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# GWU Honors Students Participate in NC Big Sweep

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Office of University Communications

September 24, 2012

## *Over 60 Students Assist in New River Clean Up Effort*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — One of the oldest rivers in the world recently received a helping hand from Gardner-Webb University honors students as they participated in an annual environmental clean up event. Over 60 students, faculty members, and volunteers took part in the annual New River clean up day, held Sept. 8 in Ashe County, N.C.

The initiative is coordinated by North Carolina Big Sweep, an organization whose purpose is to rid the environment of litter by promoting environmental education and organizing annual statewide cleanup efforts of waterways and other areas.

According to Dr. Tom Jones, GWU professor of biology and dean of the honors program, the Gardner-Webb University Honors Student Association has participated in the clean up effort for many of the past 25 years. “This has become our big annual tradition,” Jones said. “We drive up on Friday night, cook dinner and camp out. Then, we get up early the next morning, hit the river, and see just how much junk we can pull out of it in a four-hour time span.”

Students hauled out old tires, trash, and a variety of items that would have likely remained environmental hazards if not removed. Anna Kullmar is a freshman honors student, and she said in spite of some minor injuries, it was a great experience. “It was an absolute blast,” Kullmar shared. “I had some battle scars from a canoe hitting me, but we pulled tires out. There were screaming girls and giant spiders. It was a long day, but it was great.”

Other participants used the opportunity to get to know others on the trip. Junior Mary Hellstrom said her favorite part of the weekend was getting to chat with Spanish and French teacher assistants. “They usually always come on Big Sweep with us,” Hellstrom reported. “I spent time talking with them and getting to know a little more about their culture. That was the highlight of my weekend.”

As part of the waterway clean up, students donned plastic gloves and then accessed several sections of the river in canoes. They scanned the waters and the shoreline for trash and debris, where they found lumber, old tires, plastic tarps, and everything in between.

While the New River clean up day was held in September, the statewide NC Big Sweep initiative is set for the first Saturday in October. On Oct. 6, volunteers from all 100 counties in North Carolina and approximately 90 countries worldwide will come together to clean up land and waterways in their area.

North Carolina Big Sweep was founded in 1989 after operating for two years as a grassroots coastal clean up organization. More than 300,000 volunteers have collected over 10.3 million pounds of trash from the North Carolina environment as part of efforts coordinated by NC Big Sweep. For more information on local initiatives, call Cindy Prewitt at the Cleveland County Health Department at 704-447-8206.

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them not only for professional success but for lives marked by empathy, compassion and a commitment to service on the broadest scale.*

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