**Press Release**

For Immediate Release

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**Great American Cleanup 2010**

**Kickoff Rally – Houston**

**Article by: John Hickernell**

The Great American Cleanup 2010, with its theme, “Green Starts Here,” had its inception right here in our own home town of Houston. Houston was the obvious choice because of its commitment to volunteerism, being environmentally friendly, and commitment to improving the quality of life for ourselves and our neighbors. 1300 Houston volunteers participated this year.

Keep Houston Beautiful hosted the kickoff at Sam Houston Park near downtown and marked its beginning with the first cleanup events. Robin Blut, through her many years of dedicated leadership at Keep Houston Beautiful, has set the bar high and Keep America Beautiful looked for the rest of the country to step up in the same way as has Houston as its efforts continue across the nation to make our world greener and cleaner.

As The Great America Cleanup 2010 unfolded from March through May, over 3 million volunteers in all 50 states were anticipated to participate in more than 30,000 cleanups, greenups, fixups, recycling, beautification, and community improvement events in more than 32,000 communities as part of the program. Through this event, Keep America Beautiful is encouraging volunteer groups, community leaders, and people of all ages and walks of life to step up in their efforts to create more sustainable communities.

The program for the Houston rally was jammed packed with exciting activities beginning with the inspiring sound of the Parker Elementary School Marching Band, as well as the heart pounding music and thrilling performances by the Raul Yzaguirre School for Success, Heartbeat of Soul Marching Band. This was followed by the music of local rap star, J. Xavier.

On hand were representatives not only from Keep Houston Beautiful, but also from Keep America Beautiful and Keep Texas Beautiful. Gail Cunningham, Senior Vice President of Keep America Beautiful was emcee for the rally. The official beginning of The Great American Cleanup was marked by a countdown, which included the participation of Houston Texans cheerleaders and students from Crockett Elementary School. This was followed by the presentation of the colors by The Houston Police Department honor guard as well as the singing of the national anthem by Melissa Saldivar, also of the HPD. Roy Beaty, Senior Minister, Sugar Land Church of Christ provided the invocation.

Houston’s Mayor, Annise Parker, in the midst of her extremely busy schedule, graciously accepted an invitation to say a few words on behalf of our amazing city. We appreciate very much her continued support of Keep Houston Beautiful, not only with the Great American Cleanup, but also throughout the year.

“There is no other place that I prefer to be at the moment,” Mayor Parker said.

Mayor Parker’s words were followed by remarks from Matthew McKenna, President of Keep America Beautiful; Jon Stephens, Board Member of Keep Texas Beautiful; and Daniel Sullenbarger, Chairman of the Houston Clean Commission.

On behalf of the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, Matthew McKenna presented to Keiji Asakura RLA, Partner/Principal, Asakura Robinson Company, The President’s Volunteer Service Award, in recognition and appreciation of his commitment to strengthening our Nation and for making a difference through volunteer service. Keiji, is a shining example to all Houstonians, and persons all across this great country, of what can, and should, be done to help make our world a better place.

This was followed by the presentation of the Hometown Hero Award to Kathy Williams of KPRC Channel which was received on her behalf by Bill Balleza, News Anchor at Channel 2.

The Great American Cleanup would not have been possible without its National Sponsors and Partners: Dow Chemical Company; GLAD Products Company; Nestle Pure Life Purified Water; o.b.® tampons; Pepsi-Cola Company; Scotts® Miracle-Gro®; Solo Cup Company; Troy-Bilt Lawn & Garden Equipment; Waste Management; the Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, and our Promotional Partners; Crescent Art and Framing Products; Get Green Racing; and our Educational Partner Rubber Manufacturer’s Association. Many of these companies had displays at the rally.

Nestle did more than bring the water for the event; Nestle donated more than five thousand bottles of water for the cleanup, and provided recycling bottle displays at the rally. For every one thousand empty water bottles it collected, it donated a park bench to Houston.

The local sponsors who help keep Houston green and beautiful are also very important to our efforts: HLS Enterprises; Boyer, Inc.; Living Earth; Asakura Robinson Company; Tim Hansen ASLA, MacQuarie group; Home Depot; and ExxonMobil.

Several check presentations were made at the rally. The first by Everett Bass, Vice President Public Sector Services of Waste Management in support of the Pro-Vision and Sunnyside projects.

Then Laura Ambrose, Responsible Care Leader with The Dow Chemical Company presented a check from Dow Chemical in support of the Denver Harbor project.

Jim Tates, Regional President, Southwest Region for The Scotts® Miracle-Gro® Company, presented a check from Scott’s® Miracle-Gro® in support of the Westbury project.

Mike Simmons, Chief Executive Officer of Greenstar, North America, presented a check from Greenstar in support of the project at Wiess Park.

Finally, Cristina Block, Public Affairs Specialist with H-E-B, presented check from H-E-B in support of our project at Wiess Park as well.

As the rally came to an end, it was time for the prize drawings. Harry Hayes, Director, City of Houston Department Solid Waste Management assisted in the drawing for the prizes. Given away were a Troy-Bilt Mower; 1,000 lbs. of free shredding by Greenstar; an HP Printer from Halliburton; and a composting bin from C. E. Shepherd.

To wrap everything up, J. Xavier performed a piece at the end of the rally that he had composed especially for the Great American Cleanup.





