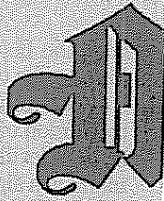


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Mandeville beautification group honored

In this season of giving and receiving, Susan Russell has done both.

Russell is director of Keep Mandeville Beautiful. The organization's mission is to change "attitudes and behaviors of people through educational programs and activities aimed at reducing litter; increasing recycling, beautification and heightening environmental awareness."

In other words, she and her charges are in charge of helping keep Mandeville the attractive place it is.

As for the receiving, Russell received word recently that Keep Mandeville Beautiful was a recipient of the Keep America Beautiful President's Circle Award. The group was lauded at Keep America Beautiful's 57th annual conference in Orlando, Fla., for its exemplary work. What a nice gift, just in time for the holidays!

"We're a small organization, a grass-roots group, really," Russell said. "Every day, you want to accomplish your mission, to make a difference in your community. To have a national organization like Keep America Beautiful recognize our efforts makes it all worthwhile."

And if you've spent any time in Mandeville in recent years, you've seen the benefits of KMB's work. They hold citywide cleanups several times a year and have helped institute recycling programs in the schools. They've undertaken planting projects that make Mandeville greener and reach thousands of people each year through school and civic activities.

This year marks the second time Keep Mandeville Beautiful has earned the President's Circle Award.

Keep Mandeville Beautiful is an affiliate organization of Keep America Beautiful and as such, must remain in good standing with the national group to be considered for the President's Circle Award. There are numerous benchmarks the group must meet, but they focus on three specific areas: litter prevention, recycling and waste reduction, and beautification/community greening.

To that end, Russell and company must conduct an annual litter index, calculate its cost/benefit ratio and engage volunteers to take greater responsibility for their community involvement. Continued education is also part of what the group must do to stay abreast of the latest information and tools available to better meet its goals. Keep America Beautiful President and CEO Matthew M. McKenna had high praise for the local outfit.

"One of Keep America Beautiful's most effective tools is the work of our grass-roots network of affiliate organizations, which has an impact on millions of Americans each year," he said. "Our affiliates are providing real solutions to problems like litter, graffiti, illegal dumping and other community blights. By engaging people of all ages in community improvement efforts, Keep Mandeville Beautiful is represented among the best in promoting the values Keep America Beautiful espouses nationally."

If you'd like to learn more about Keep Mandeville Beautiful or would like to become a volunteer, call 624.3165 or send e-mail to kmb@cityofmandeville.com.

Merry Christmas to everyone.