

The Coulee Clean-Up: A Social Marketing Program for Litter Pickup in Lethbridge, Canada

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Chapter Overview

This case from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, details a social marketing program called *The Coulee Clean-Up*, initiated by the Helen Schuler Nature Centre (HSNC) to encourage litter clean-up and an anti-littering orientation. The program encourages participation in an event-style litter clean-up whereby participants form groups with colleagues, friends, and/or family to clean an assigned section of the local coulees, which are ravines around the riverbed, and surrounding hillsides during the designated clean-up period. The program offers a fun, social experience to encourage participation. It has a secondary goal of instilling long-term anti-littering behavior change by sensitizing participants to the impact of litter, enhancing anti-littering social norms, and offering social proof against littering. Business employee groups, friend groups, and families are the key target markets for the program. The program provides volunteers with all necessary supplies, a month-long window of opportunity for flexible scheduling, and a fun barbecue at the end of the clean-up period to enhance program attractiveness. The program began in 2008 and has successfully grown over the past 10 years thanks to attention to volunteer needs and long-term corporate partnerships.

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D. Z. Basil et al. (eds.), *Social Marketing in Action*,

Springer Texts in Business and Economics,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13020-6_24

Background

This case from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, details a social marketing program called *The Coulee Clean-Up*, initiated by the Helen Schuler Nature Centre (HSNC) to encourage litter clean-up and an anti-littering orientation. The program encourages participation in an event-style litter clean-up whereby participants form groups with colleagues, friends, and/or family to clean an assigned section of the local coulees, which are ravines around the riverbed, and surrounding hillsides during the designated clean-up period. The program offers a fun, social experience to encourage participation. It also has a secondary goal of instilling long-term anti-littering behavior change by sensitizing participants to the impact of litter, enhancing anti-littering social norms, and offering social proof against littering.

Motivation to Participate

Social norms are unwritten rules people infer about acceptable behavior. People often look to others' behavior to determine social norms or how they should behave (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Seeing that many others are involved with this, anti-trash effort should develop and reinforce social norms toward environmental protection, by making salient the idea that others find litter unacceptable. HSNC sought to underscore environmental protection social norms through their Coulee Clean-Up program, so that the immediate act of litter clean-up might also lead to long-term, pro-environmental attitudes and greater care for the environment. Additionally, the event is a volunteering opportunity. Volunteering allows participants to demonstrate social responsibility, which is becoming increasingly valued in Canada as well as worldwide (Cone/Ebiquity, 2015). Thus, volunteering and combatting litter are both important social norms that could motivate participation. Finally, this is a social event. People get together with others to participate and later celebrate their participation together at a barbecue. HSNC has positioned this as a fun and social way to spend time in nature.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985) can be applied to explain behavior change in this situation. The TPB suggests that three primary factors determine an individual's decision to perform a behavior: their attitude toward the behavior, their perception of social norms regarding the behavior, and their perceived control or ability to make a difference by performing the behavior. If individuals have a positive attitude toward environmental protection, believe others do as well, and believe that picking up litter is an effective way of protecting the environment, these things together should increase their intention to participate in the Coulee Clean-Up, which should lead to participation.

Additionally, the social aspects of this event serve as an important motivator. HSNC positioned this event as a fun and social way to engage with nature from the beginning, and they continue to focus on this aspect of the program. People participate in groups. They either sign up with others or join in with a group to meet



Fig. 24.1 A Coulee Clean-Up volunteer group. *Source* Helen Schuler Nature Centre

others. Having a meaningful and environmentally friendly way to bond with friends, family, or colleagues, or to make new friends was and continues to be an effective motivator for participants (Fig. 24.1).

HSNC also sought to capitalize on corporate and organizational interest in team building, social responsibility, and volunteerism with the introduction of the Coulee Clean-Up. Cooperation among employees has long been recognized as an essential component of business success (Katz, 1964). Team-building efforts with a social responsibility component are a growing trend within businesses and organizations (Mullich, 2009), and companies increasingly are seeking to instill workplace cooperation through team building (Cain, 2011). Additionally, companies within Canada support or even encourage employee volunteering efforts (Basil, Runté, Easwaramoorthy, & Barr, 2009), companies view employee volunteering as part of their social responsibility commitment (Cook & Burchell, 2018), and companies wish to meet societal expectations that they demonstrate social responsibility (Cone/Ebiquity, 2015). The Coulee Clean-Up offers an event-style activity that can draw a team together and allow a company to demonstrate social responsibility by supporting employee volunteering.

Lethbridge Area

Residents of Lethbridge, Alberta, are very fortunate to have a vast river valley trailing right through the heart of the city. Eight urban parks in their river valley, a combined size of 16 km², form one of the largest urban park systems in North



Fig. 24.2 Coulees in Lethbridge, Alberta. *Source* <http://www.lethbridge.ca/Things-To-Do/Nature-Centre/Pages/Things-To-See.aspx>

America and the third largest in Canada. Surrounded by coulees (which are gorges or ravines carved out by rivers or streams; see Fig. 24.2), the river valley is home to hundreds of species of birds and plants as well as a unique cottonwood forest consisting of balsam poplar, narrowleaf cottonwood, and plains cottonwood. Lethbridge River Valley is the only place in the world where these three species interbreed to produce hybrids.

However, the size and topography of the river valley make it very difficult for the small city of about ninety thousand residents to secure the resources required to maintain it. By 2007, the city had received an unprecedented number of complaints about the level of debris in the valley. Residents were not only submitting formal complaints to City Hall but also publishing their grievances through letters to the local newspaper. Something needed to be done about the trash littering this otherwise beautiful reserve.

Around that time, HSNC, an urban nature center located between the river and coulees near downtown Lethbridge, had just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The center was awarded additional funding to grow their volunteer programs. The funding allowed them to hire an employee who could focus exclusively on generating community involvement. The littered condition of the river valley and the growing demand for project-based volunteer opportunities from local organizations made a clean-up initiative an appealing option. This case study explores how HSNC

developed a sustainable, volunteer-driven clean-up program that offers fun, bonding, and team-building opportunities for organizations, families, and friends while cleaning the river valley and enhancing anti-littering norms within the community. The first Coulee Clean-Up took place in 2008 and attracted almost 250 volunteers. The program is still in place and successful in 2018.

Helen Schuler Nature Centre

Founded in 1982, the Helen Schuler Nature Centre (HSNC) is operated by the City of Lethbridge. Their mission is to deliver diverse and dynamic nature interpretive programs in the community through a team of volunteers, staff, and partners. Their vision is to be part of a community that appreciates and understands the local natural environment through experience and discovery. In order to fuel environmental stewardship in the community, the center offers nature exhibits, guided tours, nature reserve trails, teaching guides, and various conservation programs. They receive more than 52,000 visitors each year (2017).

SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

The following assess the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats that faced HSNC when they developed the Coulee Clean-Up program in 2008.

Strengths

HSNC had about 40 volunteers who could help with organizing the Coulee Clean-Up.

HSNC had a great reputation in the community, which lent credibility to the Coulee Clean-Up effort.

During the 2007–2008 season, HSNC had about 25,000 visitors, providing an easily accessible target market for Coulee Clean-Up participants.

People within the Lethbridge area appreciate and value the beauty of the riverbed preserve.

There is generally a social norm toward environmental protection, volunteerism, and social responsibility. These social norms which support the goals of the program are an important part of the TPB model.

Participants have the opportunity to demonstrate to others their support of these social norms by participating.

The program offers a high level of control for participants. Anyone who is capable of walking around and picking up garbage can make a visible difference that they can see and appreciate, consistent with the TPB component of perceived control. The Coulee Clean-Up offers a fun activity to share with others that is free to all.

Weaknesses

HSNC did not have a dedicated volunteer coordinator or the resources to coordinate volunteers for the Coulee Clean-Up.

HSNC was not in charge of managing or maintaining the river valley, so in some ways, the Coulee Clean-Up was outside of the organization's purview.

Their focus had been primarily on education initiatives previously, so they did not have experience with creating and running behavior change programs.

The program was not well-suited to anyone with physical disabilities.

Opportunities

There was a growing demand for project-based volunteering; people wanted to get involved through one-time engagement efforts.

Local organizations were increasingly seeking team-building opportunities.

Canadian companies were increasingly supporting and encouraging employee volunteering.

Families were also looking for family bonding activities, as the community had a dearth of options to engage children.

Schools were looking for community engagement opportunities for their students.

Threats

Poor weather conditions could discourage participation.

The coulees are steep and cover a lot of areas—there may be physical isolation and safety risks.

The opportunity for other team-building or group/family activities, such as fun runs and river floats, was increasing in Lethbridge.

Various target audiences would require a different marketing strategy, which could be costly and time-consuming.

Coulees are very fragile when they are wet. People walking on wet coulees damage its ecosystem, which could limit HSNC's ability to offer the program at certain times.

Although the coulees are vast, clean-up spaces are still limited. There might not be enough area to assign to all interested volunteers.

Past and Similar Efforts

The task force formed for the purpose of carrying out the Coulee Clean-Up spent time researching past clean-up campaigns but could not find a campaign quite like the one they hoped to develop. The most similar initiatives were primarily national clean-up initiatives, such as Pitch-In and The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. These national campaigns provided the task force with examples of advertising, checklists, and evaluation methods.

The task force was able to connect with representatives of Pitch-In Canada because of Pitch-In's partnership with the City of Lethbridge. Pitch-In Canada uses a marketing strategy that focuses primarily on the community and neighborhood, encouraging their target audiences to clean up and maintain urban areas, such as alleys and nearby parks. Their representatives indicated that the main barrier they found was participants' perception that they should not need to pick up other people's garbage. In general, prospective participants of Pitch-In thought that their yard was very clean and that they did a lot of work to keep it that way. They did not think that their neighbors were maintaining their property to the same standards and did not like the idea of having to clean up after them. For the Coulee Clean-Up, a similar barrier could affect recruitment of prospective volunteers. If prospective participants felt others were frequently littering, environmental protection might not be viewed as a social norm. Additionally, if they felt others would just keep littering, they may not have a sense of control with the behavior. They would not feel that they could actually make a difference. Without social norms and perceived control, the Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that behavior change, in this case participating in the event and subsequently littering less, is unlikely. The task force would have to address these potential barriers.

Target Audiences

While all Lethbridge residents were welcome to participate in the Coulee Clean-Up, the task force still needed to segment and target prospective groups for campaign effectiveness and efficiency. They identified four subsets of the Lethbridge population that were ready for action and easy to reach. These four subsets were business groups, new residents or unconnected individuals, family and friend groups, and middle schools. These groups were particularly efficient to target because they required unique but similar strategies for recruitment.

Business groups refer to local businesses or groups (e.g., churches, clubs) who have a community involvement mandate or interest. In 2008, local companies were developing volunteer policies and programs that supported employee volunteerism in a variety of ways. Sometimes, employees were allowed to volunteer during paid work hours. In other instances, companies would organize a group of employees for team-building exercises. As such, the Coulee Clean-Up offered local companies a

team-building opportunity that also allowed them to demonstrate social responsibility to the community, both popular goals for businesses.

The task force also wanted to target individuals who were new to the community or who otherwise did not have social connections with whom they could participate. They recognized that there were people in the community who would want to participate but (1) were not comfortable coordinating a group, (2) were new to the community, or (3) did not feel like their friends and family would be interested in the program. For these individuals, the program could allow them to meet new people, and in the process, it could solidify perceived social norms regarding environmental protection. This target group was not differentiated by demographic variables, but rather by lack of social ties. In terms of psychographic and lifestyle segmentation, this group was interested in environmental and socially responsible behavior, as well as with making new social connections. For this group, then, an existing environmental attitude, a perception of social norms, and a sense of control (the ability to make a difference), would be key components for participation, consistent with the TPB.

The task force also targeted people who wanted to participate with family and friends. People in this group are characterized by being active and spending time outdoors. This target group includes friends who like to be active together and parents who want to provide their child with experiences that help them to become engaged, responsible citizens. Given their outdoor orientation, this group most likely had strong existing positive attitudes toward socially responsible behavior and environmental protection. The Coulee Clean-Up provided these groups with a new opportunity to be active in the community and spend time together. Similar to the previous target group, this group's attitudes and perceived norms fit well within the TPB framework. It also offered a fun bonding experience, which is particularly valued by family and friend groups.

Finally, the task force wanted to target middle schools in order to get that age group involved in the community. Based on the participation statistics from other HSNC programs, the task force recognized that there was a drop-in participation rates in community programs among kids ages 12 and up. Consequently, the task force wanted to give middle schools new opportunities to engage their students in nature and the community, reinforcing these social norms.

Objectives and Goals

HSNC's mandate for programs and services had always been to provide hands-on engagement with nature. The Coulee Clean-Up certainly met that requirement. Participants were able to spend one to two hours outside while having a positive impact on the environment. As they picked up litter, they were also noticing the different plants blooming and watching the bugs and animals that live in the area. In order to encourage participation in the program, HSNC had the goal to provide a comprehensive service that would appeal to all four target audiences.

Behavior Objectives

The program's overarching behavior goal was to engage individuals and groups in picking up trash throughout the Lethbridge River Valley. Longer term, the goal was to encourage these people to return to participate in the Coulee Clean-Up year after year. The task force determined that they needed about 550 volunteers each year for the program and hoped many of them would be recurring. Organizers initially feared that volunteer rates exceeding that number would invite new issues to the program, such as running out of clean-up sites. Volunteers who legitimately want to make a difference could begin to feel disappointed in their level of contribution if they did not have enough work to do. Volunteer numbers below this level would not be able to clean the entire river valley during the slated campaign period. Over time, the program expanded the number of clean-up areas and reduced the size of each area, thus allowing them to accommodate more volunteers.

Knowledge Objectives

Given the fragility of the coulee area landscape, it was important to educate volunteers about proper trash collection methods. It was critical that volunteers stay off the coulees after a rainfall in order to prevent permanent damage. The task force recognized that many people do not know how fragile the coulees are. Their knowledge objective was therefore to have participants know that walking on wet coulees causes unnecessary and irreversible damage to the environment, in addition to solidifying social norms toward environmental protection.

Belief Objectives

A general belief objective relevant to all target groups was that of solidifying social norms regarding anti-littering and environmental protection in general. Given that the program had four specific target groups, the task force had a specific belief objective for each target audience. They wanted business groups to believe that their business would benefit from the employee cooperation involved with this team effort and to believe they would benefit from this demonstration of corporate social responsibility. For unconnected individuals, the belief objective was that this program would allow them to get involved in their community and meet new people. The belief objective for family and friend groups was that this program was a fun and free opportunity to be active and spend time with loved ones, thereby reinforcing positive attitudes toward social responsibility, as well as a way to make a difference in the community, consistent with the control element of TPB. Finally, the task force wanted middle school teachers and administrators to believe that the Coulee Clean-Up would be an easy and fun way to engage their students in the community and nature, helping them to enhance students' environmental social norms.

Factors Influencing Adoption Behavior

A number of factors serve to encourage, and discourage, the desired behavior adoption.

Barriers

Participants are not all available to volunteer on the same day.

The coulees are very steep in some places, and some volunteers have limited mobility.

Cleaning a site for longer than two hours may become tedious or even physically difficult.

Volunteers may feel stigmatized when onlookers see them picking up garbage in public spaces.

Litter collection is weather dependent.

Touching litter can be dirty and unappealing.

Individuals new to the community or without social ties may feel too intimidated to reach out to the organization.

Benefits

Participation would evoke personal and community pride.

The event gives people an opportunity to spend time with family and friends.

Businesses can benefit from positive public relations through this show of social responsibility.

Businesses can enhance employee commitment through this cooperative effort.

Middle schools can solidify the social norms of social responsibility, volunteering, environmental protection, and anti-littering.

Competing Behaviors

Numerous other volunteering opportunities exist within the community. Individuals and companies can easily access other opportunities by contacting a local volunteering coordination organization, Volunteer Lethbridge.

Companies can facilitate team-building through many other means, such as kayaking the river, hiking in the beautiful nearby mountains, or even hosting a fundraiser.

Individuals seeking connections can join the Newcomers Association.

Families seeking opportunities to connect can take advantage of the many outdoor opportunities available in the area such as hiking and kayaking or they can enjoy various community events and festivals.

Those interested in enjoying nature can go to the many parks located throughout Lethbridge or the nature reserve in the river valley.

Simply not cleaning up and staying indoors are easier behaviors.

There are other outdoor activities and sports that may be more fun.

Positioning

The campaign was positioned as a fun group activity to help the environment. Both the social aspect and the socially responsible aspect were equally important. Communication to each target group differed somewhat, but the general positioning remained relatively consistent.

Marketing Strategies

Product Strategy

Litter pickup is the *product* for the Coulee Clean-Up. HSNC wants individuals, groups, and companies to sign up for a timeslot and location and agree to pick up litter for one-and-a-half to two hours at the assigned place and time during their campaign.

Augmented Products

Before a group cleans up a site, one of the group members has to pick up a clean-up kit. The group member signs out a kit and indicates when they will return it. Each kit includes a first-aid kit, sharps container, map, data sheet (to report how many bags were filled and any unusual items found), clean gloves, and garbage bags. It is designed to fit neatly inside any vehicle for easy access.

A more recent product augmentation is the use of road signs to reduce the stigma of picking up garbage. These signs give the Coulee Clean-Up legitimacy. They provide a positive image for the Coulee Clean-Up, making the activity look like a community rally (Fig. 24.3).

At the end of the Coulee Clean-Up each year, HSNC holds a windup party to thank all the volunteers. All participants are welcome to bring their family, even if their family did not participate in the clean-up themselves. About 150 guests typically attend the celebration. The party has games for the children, barbequed food, and draw prizes. The lead coordinator also uses this event to announce how much garbage was collected and some of the crazy items that were found. For example, once a volunteer found a student card from the 1950s. HSNC actually managed to find the card owner and return it to her. The windup is also an opportunity for



Fig. 24.3 A Web site image used to attract family volunteers. Source <http://www.lethbridge.ca/Things-To-So/Nature-Centre/Pages/Get-Involved.aspx>

businesses to promote their involvement. Businesses can sponsor the event or they can donate awards and prizes.

Price Strategy

The primary *price* faced by participants is that of devoting time to the event. Participants must sacrifice two hours' time, plus travel, and organization time, to pick up litter. There is no actual financial price to participants. All volunteers, including business groups, can participate in the Coulee Clean-Up at no charge. The only financial cost that volunteers may incur is related to transportation, depending on the location of the clean-up site. However, volunteer groups with limited transportation options can work with an event coordinator to find an area that meets their needs.

Place Strategy

A key *place* strategy has been to offer groups various options in terms of clean-up dates and sites. The “official” campaign starts on Earth Day and continues until the end of May. There is considerable flexibility for groups wanting to participate and Nature Centre staff message to the community that supplies are available at any time of year and that they will always support community conservation projects. Some clean-ups take place in the month of June.

At first, the campaign ran for a relatively short time period, but over the years, it was lengthened. By broadening the event dates, coordinators were able to accommodate volunteers with different schedules by letting volunteers pick their preferred clean-up date and time. It also ensured that groups would have time to reschedule their event in case of rainy weather. Due to the program’s popularity, HSNC increased the number of sites by including other natural areas away from the coulees and river valley, such as the agricultural fields northeast of the city. This transition not only provided more options for groups with limited mobility but also made room for additional volunteers. Event coordinators were even able to attract groups willing to clean up construction and industrial areas.

Another place strategy was to make the clean-up sites more appealing to business groups. HSNC coordinators accomplished this task by strategically using the traffic count near each clean-up site. Coordinators use the traffic count map to provide educated estimates of the impact of sponsorship opportunities in terms of visibility. Business groups are then encouraged to display their own signs for promotional purposes.

Promotion Strategy

The *promotion* strategy had two stages. When the Coulee Clean-Up first started, the coordinators worked on recruiting new volunteers. They have since switched their strategy to focus more on keeping current volunteers, though new volunteers are still welcome. To initially attract volunteers from each target audience, the event coordinators relied primarily on direct marketing tactics and contacting potential volunteers at related events. They had a display set up in the nature center and trained their naturalists and tour guides to answer questions. They also attended expos and special events, such as the Home and Garden Show, which attracts event patrons characterized as active and outdoorsy. Event coordinators would promote the event by sharing stories and handing out information pamphlets. Directly marketing to potential participants allowed event coordinators to immediately address any concerns people had about participation as well as provide examples of how fun and engaging the event is for everyone.

Event coordinators attracted businesses by discussing ways of gaining public exposure for the company through event participation. They would encourage employees to wear matching t-shirts or display their corporate banner at the site. They would also recommend that businesses take a photograph of their team at their

clean-up site for the center to use in their various forms of advertising. For instance, when the coordinators attend an expo, they would make sure to have a PowerPoint presentation rotating through the various pictures of volunteer groups. Event staff often found that once word got out that a particular business participated in the clean-up, other businesses in the same industry would follow suit. They also stressed the team-building aspects of participation.

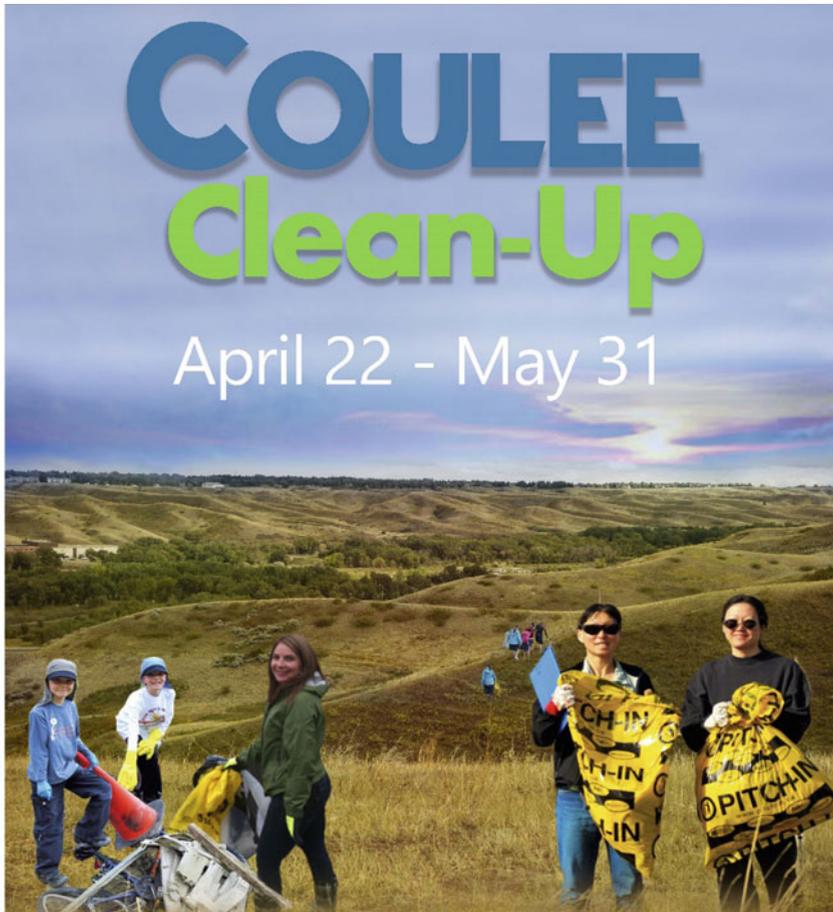
Once the event coordinators hit their volunteer goal, they switched much of their promotional strategy to volunteer retention. When they first recruited volunteers, they made sure to collect contact information in order to create a distribution list. They spent less money on paid advertising and focused more on email and social media updates. Event coordinators also revised the advertising message. Since volunteers already had experience with the event, event coordinators did not have to focus on the benefits and barriers of participation, but rather the event details, such as important dates and reminders. Their updates would include images of volunteer groups from previous years and include a call to action, such as “please contact us if you would like to participate again this year” (see Fig. 24.4). Finally, event coordinators also did not have to spend so much time matching volunteer groups with appropriate clean-up sites. Many groups felt a lot of pride and ownership about their clean-up site and wanted to clean the same site each year. Due to natural attrition, some new volunteers would always be needed. Although a strong focus was placed on volunteer retention, the program continues to put forth the effort to recruit new volunteers as well.

People

HSNC had about 40 individuals who could help to develop and organize the program at its inception. Additionally, the center had about 30,000 visitors per year (in 2012) and 51,000 visitors per year (in 2017) who were potential contacts for program participation.

Process

HSNC employees carefully assign locations based on their knowledge of litter accumulation. Each year, event coordinators spend time matching volunteer groups to appropriate cleaning sites. They know which cleaning sites will have more garbage based on proximity to roads, parking lots, and access points (e.g., trails leading to the river or between coulees). Such information gives them an idea of the type of group that is needed to clean the site within two hours. Coordinators then collect information about the group in order to make a match. They ask questions related to group size, mobility, age range, and site preferences. Some groups prefer steep coulees in order to get a workout, while other groups prefer a more accessible site to accommodate young children. For unconnected individuals, HSNC coordinators organize a drop-in group. Drop-in groups have a designated place and time to



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Fig. 24.4 Coulee Clean-Up recruiting flyer for 2018

meet each other and the designated coordinator. At that time, they receive all the information and tools they need to participate. This sort of planning and coordination allows HSNC to make appropriate assignments, so the product meets the expectations and abilities of the participants.

In order to minimize safety risks and confusion, coordinators offer an orientation meeting to all groups. At that time, volunteers are given a checklist that can be relayed to group members not in attendance. HSNC coordinators also work closely with the city's transportation department to minimize traffic safety risks. They look at a traffic count map to determine high- and low-risk clean-up sites. Large signs are then strategically placed on the side of the road near high-risk sites to make sure that motorists are aware of volunteers and parked vehicles in the area.

To reduce the burden of transporting garbage bags from a clean-up site to the appropriate waste facility, HSNC coordinators partnered with the city's parks department. Once volunteers are finished cleaning a site, they place the garbage bags at a centralized location alongside the road and leave the site. They do not have to worry about loading the garbage inside of their vehicles. Parks employees are scheduled to pick up all the bags after the clean-up. This means that the product can be limited to picking up garbage, rather than asking participants to also haul the garbage.

In order to minimize costs each year, event coordinators had to develop strong ties with other businesses and services in the community. HSNC partnered with the city's parks department, so volunteers would not have to transport garbage. They also partnered with other organizations to provide supplies for the clean-up kits. For example, the fire department has supplied first-aid kits and Home Depot supplied gloves. Similarly, Pitch-In Canada would provide extra garbage bags to the city's waste and recycling department that could then be donated to the Coulee Clean-Up. These bags had the additional benefit of promoting how much waste was actually found in a particular site. Their bright color made it easy for volunteers and onlookers to spot and point out from a distance. To encourage middle schools to participate in the event, they put aside some of the sponsorship funding to pay for school buses to transport students to and from the clean-up site. Corporate sponsorship and donations also enabled the event coordinators to grow their windup event. They attracted major prizes, such as RV rentals, canoes, barbeques, and kayaks. In particular, Pratt & Whitney Canada has been a dedicated, long-term supporter since program inception.

Evaluation Measures

Initially, HSNC's primary goal was to attract 550 volunteers to participate in the Coulee Clean-Up. This goal was met, and they continued to enjoy success with the program year over year. Each year HSNC tracks the number of participating volunteers, the number of designated areas cleaned, and the number of bags of trash collected to evaluate the program's success. Additional clean-up sites were added in

Table 24.1 Program measures

Year	Volunteers	Registered areas	Areas completed	Bags collected
2008	350	N/a	29	175
2009	400	N/a	60	565
2010	198	N/a	39	228
2011	454	N/a	54	506
2012	602	N/a	23	458
2013	228	N/a	22	296
2014	213	N/a	24	221
2015	517	46	46	306
2016	943	70	68	356
2017	1319	94	87	560
2018	1534	91	86	440

2018 statistics updated to actual as of June 30, 2018

2012, and the size of each plot was reduced to better suit volunteer interest and abilities as well as to provide enough opportunity for the growing number of volunteers. Approximately, a month was designated for clean-up, from late April through mid-May, in order to accommodate volunteer availability.

In 2008, 350 volunteers collected 175 bags of trash. In 2018, volunteer participation had expanded to 1437 participants, and 415 bags of trash were collected. Table 24.1 provides year by year statistics.

In addition to litter pickup, the secondary goal of Coulee Clean-Up was to instill a social norm of environmental protection. This seems to be succeeding as well. The number of bags of garbage collected per participant has continued to decrease since the program's inception in 2008. Since the size of each area was reduced somewhat, direct comparisons are not possible, but this trend is evident nonetheless.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The ease with which the Coulee Clean-Up attracts volunteers and sponsors each year demonstrates how wildly successful this program has been in Lethbridge. The task force researched successful clean-up models from similar programs and transformed it into a model that would work for them. Then, the event coordinators had a strategic marketing message and clear communication channels for target audiences. Finally, they were able to attract strategic partnerships in order to minimize costs and make the program sustainable each year.

HSNC has been sensitive to participant feedback, learning from volunteers how to improve the program. One key example of learning was evident when volunteers expressed some discomfort with how they might be viewed when collecting trash, as well as concern over the safety of collecting near roads. To address this, signs were

developed to be placed on nearby roadways when volunteer crews are working. This contributes to safety, as well as informing motorists of the positive efforts of the volunteers. Due to this willingness to learn and adapt, the program continues to thrive.

The demand from the community to have more project-based volunteer opportunities in the river valley has inspired HSNC employees to develop new ways to get involved. One possible project is an annual weed pull wherein volunteers can foster biodiversity by removing invasive weeds and plants from the river valley. Such a program would require an educational component to ensure that volunteers are not removing native plants by accident. This educational component creates a new barrier because the program would no longer be a traditional project-based volunteering model that typically requires little to no training. However, the community interest certainly makes it potentially appealing.

Another project that may be of interest and perhaps a closer fit is the Shoreline Clean-Up, which is same concept as Coulee Clean-Up except every single piece of trash is tracked to produce reports indicating what was found where and in what quantity. This approach has allowed others to show with great certainty that cigarette butts are the number one item of trash affecting our shorelines (by items found and cataloged by volunteers). This project is a nice blend of conservation and citizen science.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think the Theory of Planned Behavior is an appropriate way to frame this case? What are the strengths and weaknesses of applying that particular theory to this case?
2. What is another theory that could effectively be applied to this case? Please thoroughly explain the theory you select, as well as its application to this case.
3. “HSNC should have focused their attention on eliminating the behavior of littering before it occurs, rather than cleaning up after people litter.” Elaborate on the pros and cons of this statement.
4. Identify and describe one way HSNC could increase company participation.
5. Identify an additional target audience the Coulee Clean-Up could seek. How would you suggest appealing to this audience?

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