



# Canoeing for a Cause

*GWU Honors Student Association Participates in Big Sweep*

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Recently, Ashe County, N.C., was invaded by a plethora of Gardner-Webb Honors students with one common goal: ridding the New River of all things unnatural, from coke cans, to swing sets, to tires. Seventy-one honors students, faculty, alumni and friends, the biggest group in GWU history, camped alongside the river to take part in Big Sweep, the annual retreat for the Honors Student Association.

The North Carolina Big Sweep, Inc., is an organization dedicated to cleaning up the state's waterways. Since its beginning in the late 1980s, Big Sweep has had more than 300,000 volunteers and removed 10.3 million pounds of trash from North Carolina's rivers, beaches, and lakes. Dr. Tom

Jones, professor of biology and director of the honors program, said that GWU has been involved in Big Sweep for over twenty years. In that time, he has been able to witness firsthand the difference Big Sweep has made on the New River. He notes that the trash itself has diminished and that he's "seeing many more of those bottom clams, which indicates good water quality."

Service comes in many shapes and forms. Some focus on immediate results while others, like Big Sweep, look more towards the future. "I think we're making a better experience for those that follow us," Jones said. Dr. Perry Hildreth, an associate professor of philosophy and new member to the Big Sweep team, said he has been involved in similar service projects and couldn't agree more. "When you think about the University's mission statement, 'For God and Humanity', you see that part of what the university tries to teach is a basic sort of attitude about caring for the future," he said.



These students not only perform a service for those who live and work on the New River, but they are able to bond and have fun in the process. This project also exemplifies the honors motto of "try something different." "You know me," Jones added. "I like to push people just a little beyond their comfort zone." While he says that every aspect of Big

Sweep is important, Jones still believes that for the honors students, "the bonding is the most important issue."

His students would agree. Taylor Doolittle, a senior international business major from Charlotte, N.C., has gone on Big Sweep since his freshman year, and cites fellowship as one of the most enjoyable things about the trip. His thoughts are echoed by freshman Jessica Hibbard, a photojournalism major from Waxhaw, N.C. Though this was her first Big Sweep experience, she came to a similar conclusion, "We were building community within the body of Christ and we were serving with a Christ-like attitude."

