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Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Young Ambassadors of Pennsylvania Program Graduates the Class of 2024



Oluseyi Oduntan and Hetvi Shah, both seniors from Bensalem High School, Bucks County cleaned up their school grounds. (left) Columbia Gas Environmental Coordinator, Will Anderson and Ambassadors Riley Lepley and Maya Lin in the field. (right)

(June 5, 2024) Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful celebrated the 2024 class of Young Ambassadors program during a virtual graduation ceremony. The program graduated 28 Ambassadors who committed to eight months of service, while representing and upholding the mission and values of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. Commencement speakers included Michael Carroll, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Phoebe Coles, Board Chair of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. In attendance were Young Ambassador parents, guardians, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Directors, representatives from PA Department of Transportation and presenters from various workshops.

The eight-month long program offered students opportunities for training and networking with industry leaders and elected officials, including but not limited to, U.S. Representative Chrissy Houlahan, State Senator Carolyn Comitta and State Representative Lindsay Powell, on topics related to the impacts of litter, litter prevention, waste management and recycling, civic engagement and related public policy, volunteer management and social media marketing. In addition, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful partnered with Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania funded by the NiSource Charitable Foundation to provide Job Shadow Days to select Ambassadors.

Young Ambassadors were required to conduct a community assessment and coordinate a litter cleanup and an educational program. In addition to building a sense of community among program participants, the Young Ambassadors also gained presentation and leadership skills, problem-solving experience and learned the value of partnerships and networking.

Here is what a few Young Ambassadors had to say about the program:

- “I trained with the National Park Services to become a certified trash pick-up leader. I am now certified to conduct cleanup drives at Valley Forge National Park. I am looking forward to conducting many cleanup drives in this historic park!” Tanisha Agrawal, 12th grade, Conestoga High School, Chester County
- “I think one of the best things I received from this program was the job shadowing opportunity I got to do at Columbia Gas! It was wonderful to get out and experience a day in the life of others who continuously work with their community and environment!” Kathryn Boidock, 11th grade, Bentworth Senior High School, Washington County
- “My favorite session was when we got to hear from young ambassadors from other states. I enjoyed hearing the different topics and environmental issues compared to the ones where I live. I also liked to hear what they have accomplished.” Sophia Pietropaolo, 10th grade, Plum Borough High School, Allegheny County
- “The community assessment was my favorite assignment this year, because it gave me insight about the incentives and stakeholders in my area. By evaluating these measures and providing ways that my town could improve, I gained a sense of responsibility towards my town encouraging me to take action even if it’s by simply contacting the stakeholders.” Hetvi Shah, 12th grade, Bensalem High School, Bucks County
- “The clean up event taught me a lot. When brainstorming with my friends how and where we specifically wanted to do our clean up event, I realized how much our region had been affected by littering. From parks to neighborhoods, all of us had an idea for a place that could use some help. This showed me that every clean up, from one piece to a million, is crucial. After the event, I personally felt more motivated to change my own lifestyle to positively affect my environment’s condition.” Shaunak Neogi, 11th grade, Parkland High School, Lehigh County

“I’m encouraged to see the leadership displayed by this year’s Young Ambassadors,” said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll. “Our ecosystem is one of Pennsylvania’s most important resources, and it requires stewardship and care to maintain it.”

“Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is proud of the students who participated in this year’s Young Ambassador program. We are honored to offer real-world, collaborative, active learning opportunities that provide students an opportunity to collaborate with peers and industry professionals. I want to thank our Ambassadors for sharing their time, ideas and enthusiasm. I look forward to following their progress as they continue to implement change within their communities and beyond,” said Shannon Reiter, President of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. “I also want to thank the PA Department of Transportation for supporting the program. Their investment in this innovative program will have lasting impacts for the students and Pennsylvania.”

The program was recommended in the commonwealth’s Litter Action Plan announced by the Governor’s Office in November 2021 and is funded by PA Department of Transportation. Students were chosen through a competitive application process.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful will be accepting applications for the 2024-2025 school year through June 10, 2024. Visit [keppabeautiful.org](https://www.keppabeautiful.org) for information.

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About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful’s vision is a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Since 1990, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has worked with hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the state to pick up nearly 158 million pounds of trash from Pennsylvania’s roadways, waterways, greenways, vacant lots, forestlands and other community spaces. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful’s core programming focuses on litter and illegal dump prevention, cleanup, community greening, and proper waste handling and sustainable practices. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful works with many partnering organizations on the state and grassroots level to accomplish our goal of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation’s largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. To learn more about Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, visit www.keppabeautiful.org.