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Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's Young Ambassadors of Pennsylvania Program Graduates the Class of 2025



Left: Anna Oslikova, a junior from Waynesboro Area Senior High School and Kumba Tonguino, a junior from Plymouth Whitmarsh High School participated in Dow's job shadow day. Right: Silvia Kang, a sophomore from Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy and Ananya Desiredi, a junior, from Fairview High School taught kindergartners the importance of keeping Lake Erie and surrounding communities litter free.

(May 20, 2025) Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful celebrated the Young Ambassadors program class of 2025 during a virtual graduation ceremony. The program graduated 26 Ambassadors who committed to nine 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, including but not limited to, Ruby Mundok, Executive Director of Governor Shapiro's Advisory Commission on Next Generation Engagement; Wesley Robinson, Press Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; and Gerald Bright, Assistant Director of Program Development, Office of Clean and Green Initiatives, Philadelphia, PA, 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 and Dow to provide Job Shadow Days to four 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 enjoyed Networking with Professionals the most. It showed me what viable opportunities for community stewardship are available for younger people. Seeing a new generation begin to speak up in each of the different sectors was inspiring!" Edie Hahn, Scranton Preparatory School, Lackawanna County
- "The community assessment gave me the chance to see strengths and needs of my community up close. It felt great to be a part of something that could and will make a real impact. Also, collaborating with others during the assessment made it feel like a team effort, which is always motivating." Naba Hassan, Penn Wood Highschool, Delaware County
- "Hosting a cleanup event offered valuable insight not just in the physical condition of the community, but the people, systems, and social demographics within it. It was also a great exercise in networking and collaborating with other organizations with a common goal. I really enjoyed seeing individuals from a variety of backgrounds come together to achieve the mission of keeping Pennsylvania beautiful. Organizing the event did present challenges, however I believe this promoted development in aspects such as communication and advertising." Brett Anthony, Greensburg Central Catholic High School, Westmoreland County
- "My biggest takeaway during Job-Shadowing with NiSource was seeing that regardless of the industry, there are many jobs pertaining to environmental protection available. I specifically enjoyed seeing the job site and learning about different best management practices used, including silt fences, and storm drain covers. I also got the chance to speak with Cameron Thon, a civil engineer. As I am planning to become an engineer, it

was super helpful to hear about his job and see the types of plans he worked on.” Holden Siegler, Fairview High School, Erie County

“There is a generation of leaders coming to the forefront of Pennsylvania’s ecological landscape that we can all take pride in,” said PennDOT Secretary Mike Carroll. “I am confident that the future of the state’s most critical resource is in the right hands.”

As part of the graduation ceremony, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful awarded two merit-based scholarships to outstanding Young Ambassadors. These scholarships recognize one current Ambassador planning to enroll in a continuing education program and one alum who is either planning to enroll or currently enrolled in a continuing education program. Candidates must demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability through their academic pursuits and community impact. This year marks the inaugural offering of this scholarship.

Awardees:

2025 Young Ambassador Graduate: Kumba Tonguino, 11th grade, Plymouth Whitemarsh High School, Montgomery County.

2024 Young Ambassador Graduate: Shreyas Trivedi, 12th grade, Central Bucks South High School, Bucks County. Shreyas is currently awaiting final admission decisions and plans to begin college in fall of 2025.

"We genuinely appreciate our Ambassadors - their dedication, creativity, and passion have been truly uplifting," said Shannon Reiter, Executive Director of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. "We are especially proud of our scholarship recipients, Kumba and Shreyas, whose exemplary efforts have set a high standard for future Ambassadors. I'm excited to watch as they continue to create positive change, not just in their communities but far beyond. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for their generous support. Their commitment to this groundbreaking program will leave a lasting impact, empowering students and strengthening communities across 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 2025-2026 school year through June 10, 2025. Visit keeppabeautiful.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 162 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.keeppabeautiful.org.