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NJ Clean Communities Launches ‘*Love Where You Learn*’ to Create Litter-Free Schools Across New Jersey

Schools Invited to Partner with Local Clean Communities Programs on Cleanups, Education and Environmental Stewardship

TRENTON, NJ — September 23, 2026 – The New Jersey Clean Communities Council (NJCCC) is inviting public and private schools across the state to “*Love Where You Learn*” through a new initiative designed to reduce litter on school property while teaching students about environmental responsibility.

The *Love Where You Learn* program encourages schools to partner with their local Clean Communities programs to become officially designated Litter Free School Zones.

Participating schools commit to conducting at least two litter cleanups on school property during the school year while incorporating litter awareness and education into the effort. Schools will also receive official Litter Free School Zone signage, providing a visible reminder to students, staff, families and visitors not to litter.

“Schools are where lifelong habits are formed, which makes them an ideal place to reinforce the importance of preventing litter and caring for our shared environment,” said JoAnn Gemenden, executive director of the NJCCC. “*Love Where You Learn* gives students an opportunity to do more than hear about environmental stewardship. They can put what they learn into action, see the results of their work and understand that keeping the environment clean is a shared responsibility.”

Schools have flexibility in how they participate. Environmental clubs, Key Clubs and other student organizations can lead the effort, while teachers, advisors and administrators can incorporate the program into existing environmental education and community service activities.

Local Clean Communities programs serve as the point of connection and offer valuable resources. Every New Jersey county and municipality has a Clean Communities program that can potentially provide participating schools with guidance, funding and cleanup supplies such as grabbers, gloves, bags and safety vests.

“Love Where You Learn is about creating a culture of pride and responsibility that extends well beyond a single cleanup,” added Linda Doherty, chair of the NJCCC Board of Trustees. “When young people take ownership of their school environment, we hope they carry that same sense of responsibility into their neighborhoods and communities. That is how we build the next generation of environmental stewards in New Jersey.”

The program is designed around the school calendar. Schools can enroll in September, conduct their first cleanup in October or November and schedule a second cleanup for March or April. May will be dedicated to reporting results and recognizing participating schools and students.

Schools will track student participation, volunteer hours, litter and recyclables collected, educational activities and other results. Participating schools can receive an official designation, signage and certificates, as well as opportunities for social media recognition, press coverage and environmental leadership recognition. Students may also earn community service hours.

To participate, school staff begin by securing approval from their principal or Board of Education and identifying a school representative. The school then connects with its local Clean Communities coordinator, completes a participation agreement and orders its personalized Litter Free School Zone sign.

“Students may begin by picking up litter from a walkway, athletic field or school entrance, but we want the lesson to go much further,” Gemenden said. “We want them to look at that clean space afterward and understand: ‘I helped make this happen, and I can help keep it this way.’ That is the kind of lesson that can stay with a student for years.”

Schools interested in joining *Love Where You Learn* can learn more at njclean.org.

About the New Jersey Clean Communities Council

[The New Jersey Clean Communities Council](#) is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to litter abatement, education and environmental stewardship. NJCCC works with municipalities, counties, schools, businesses and volunteers throughout New Jersey to promote cleaner communities and encourage residents to take pride in the places where they live, work and learn.