

Duncan Douglas

Coronado High School

Lubbock, Texas

The Earth Steward

My family has always been conscience of protecting the environment. They would point out the "Don't Mess With Texas" signs along the highway and make sure we had littler bags in the car for our trash. If we were on a trip and saw someone throwing something out the car window, we would talk about what would happen to the earth if everyone threw their litter along the road. It was not until I was inducted into the National Honor Society at Coronado High School that I personally became more aware of the consequences of not taking care of the environment. As part of our service projects, members of the National Honor Society went about the community picking up trash and cleaning alleys, parks and other open areas. The amount of litter was amazing. The fact that a group of students were working together to clean up an area seemed to make an impact, but what could one person hope to do to make a big difference? It seemed important for me to take some responsibility for improving the situation and I decided that if each person took charge of what he or she did personally, it could make a major difference in the environment.

Once the service projects had been completed, I found that I was more aware of what was happening around the Coronado High School campus. There are around 2300 students at the school and not all of them are careful with papers, cups, straws, wrappers and bags from McDonalds, Sonic and other fast food places in the area. That can cause a lot of litter in a relatively small area. On a windy day pieces of trash could be seen blowing around in the parking lot. I started talking to my friends about being careful where they threw their trash. Sometimes if I would see littler in the parking lot, I would pick it up. I figured that if because of

what I said one person became more aware of what he or she was doing with litter, and made an effort to dispose of it correctly, it would make a difference.

To take the positive stewardship of the earth's resources a step further, I think it would be a good idea to have a major litter awareness program in the Lubbock Public Schools. There may have been some in the past, but I am not aware of them. Perhaps students could organize trash-pick-up days around their schools. There could be an essay contest for each grade and the students could write about keeping the environment free of litter. Students could think of different slogans other than "Don't Mess With Texas." Students might plan to organize their families and come up with ways to keep the neighborhood cleaner. It might be interesting to keep a journal and see how many people you see littering in a week. Classrooms could have a contest to see how many people the class members can tell about taking care of trash in an appropriate way. Art classes could create anti-littering posters. English classes could write essays. Math classes could look up statistics about the amount of trash we have in the community. History classes could research how other states or other countries handle their litter problem.

I wish I had been responsible for getting some of these ideas started, but I wasn't. Maybe I can help carry over some of these ideas when I get to college. I will be playing basketball at college and will have the opportunity to travel and maybe talk about keeping the environment cleaner in new places I visit. It is my dream to one day play in the NBA and when I do, one of my projects will be to make people everywhere more aware of what can be done on an individual level to help our planet be a better place to live. Watch for special programs a few years from now. They may be my ideas!