

Ask the Mayor March 2007

Between Valentine's and Saint Patrick's Days we keep hoping that winter is finished with us but it never pays to get overconfident. Keep the snow shovel and the salt within reach at least until April Fools Day.

I was extremely surprised that the flier about "littering" has had such a positive response. Cleaning up the city is a priority to residents and to economic redevelopment. In order to attract business to the city there are several key issues we can address. Clean neighborhoods, safe streets, and an educated work force are the keys to attracting quality business to the city.

I've been going around town on Saturdays the last few weeks along with a group of volunteers, passing out fliers and talking to folks about the campaign to clean up our town. If you think about the huge and complicated problems confronting the state of New Jersey, the United States and the world in general, keeping Bridgeton litter-free seems pretty tame and insignificant. But here's the thing – it's a problem that we can **actually fix!** And it won't take a million dollars or a bunch of experts. We can do it ourselves for nothing! All that is required is for each of us to spend a few minutes every week picking up the trash that winds up in our yards or on our sidewalks.

Nearly all of us are already doing this. I've talked to a lot of Bridgeton folks who not only clean up their own yards – they carry plastic grocery bags in their pockets so that if they see trash on the sidewalk, they can pick it up.

The source of the litter problem is a small segment of our population who throw trash in their yards or on the street. Why anyone would do such a thing is a mystery to me – but they do. And for these people, appealing to civic pride doesn't work. The only thing that will induce them to change their behavior is the knowledge that there will be a consequence to their selfish behavior – a fine.

Some seniors I have talked with have expressed concern that they will be fined for trash that blows down the street and winds up on their sidewalk or in their yard. But this is not the intent of the law. The problem is the yards that are **full of trash** – where it is obvious that over a long period of time no one has made any effort to clean up.

In all the clean-up days that I have organized since becoming mayor, I have been overwhelmed by the turnout of volunteers. **Your neighbors want to help.** If you are a home owner and unable to clean your yard because of age or disability, call me. I will come and clean it myself or I'll arrange for a volunteer to do it.

James Begley
Mayor