

TALKING TRASH, BUT THEY MEAN IT

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More than a dozen people wearing bright canary-yellow windbreakers, plastic toy sheriff badges, and bandannas in day-glow pink, green or blue fanned out in Roslindale Village. Stenciled on the back of their jackets were the words "Litter Posse." In their hands: brooms, shovels, rakes, plastic bags.

They were there to clean the streets.

Forget the gimmicks. Although the clothes and name may seem gimmicky, the residents who make up the posse are serious about solving what they see as a large neighborhood problem. They plan a weekly Saturday morning cleanup, with volunteers rotating weeks.

This is Roslindale resident Wendie Sakakeeny's second time around trying to bring attention to the problem. Two years ago she was part of a similar group. Many of the same faces are involved this time, too. "We had a lot of meetings," said Sakakeeny. "But we were not out on the street. The idea was to get people to be conscientious." The main result was the creation of an annual spring cleaning. Roslindale Pride Day, as it is called, is a popular community event but didn't make a dent on a daily basis.

"It was one of those good intentions that sort of fade away," said Adriana Cillo, who was also involved in the original group. "We want to be more aggressive with it." On this first Saturday cleanup, Cillo gave the group a pep talk at Adams Park at the heart of the Square and handed out jackets.

Another resident, Kat Brennam, held up a map of what the target areas were, most in about a six-block radius. Brennam was so fed up with the trash that she had taken to going out wearing rubber gloves and carrying garbage bags to clean up on her own. After she was joined by Sakakeeny, the pair decided to try to revive interest in the community.

They have been more successful in drawing attention from the neighborhood this time around. The Cooperative Bank donated the cost of the jackets. Super Flash T-Shirts, a West Roxbury business, threw in the cost of printing for free. Lee Blasi, an aide to City Councilor Rob Consalvo, says the MBTA has committed to keeping the Roslindale commuter rail station in better shape. A plan to build a barrier so birds can't roost is also in the works.

City Year, which this year started neighborhood-based programs, is already working with Roslindale Village Main Street on an "Adopt an Area" program, and may join forces with the posse. The Roslindale/Hyde Park members will commit to cleaning their areas at least four times a year. Jennifer O'Neil, the City Year local program director, says students from the Channing, Bates and Conley schools will be involved.

While some of the posse members raked up trash in front of a bus stop on Washington Street, people waiting for the bus stared at them.

"I'm so blown away by it," said one woman, who gave just her first name, Ann. "I can't believe it. They're giving up their time. It's not a pretty job."

Nicolene Hengen, one of the volunteers, explained why she was out picking up other people's garbage. "It's unacceptable," said Hengen. "There's a lot of civic pride in Roslindale."

One other word is prominent on the posse's jackets: Volunteer. They don't want to be mistaken

for paid city workers.

"The key is to get people to stop people from doing it," said Brennam. "I could write a book on what I've found in the trash."

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