

Friday, Aug. 15, 2008

Runners Take to Kayaks to Clean Lake

By Barbara Gelinias
Contributing Writer

Beer bottles, soda cans and fast food wrappers don't litter the ground at Grapevine Lake near Horseshoe Trails for long, thanks to members of the Lake Grapevine Runners and Walkers.

Each Monday morning about 20 members, nicknamed the "RAW Navy," go kayaking and clean up the area around the dock they use, said club member and former president Kelly Richards. She said the weekly clean up has become a ritual for the group.

Richards said it began the Monday after last Memorial Day, when the group arrived at Dove Loop boat ramp to go kayaking. She said they found the trashcans full from the holiday and the dock covered in trash. The group cleaned up the boat ramp that morning, she said. At Richards' suggestion, they decided to pick up trash on the dock every week.

"It makes a huge difference when someone is out there every week," said Mary Jo Tellin, Grapevine Parks Department community resource coordinator.

Tellin said there is an increase in trash found on Mondays, after weekends and after holidays. She said summertime ranks higher than other season for littering because more people use the lake.

After holidays, Grapevine Parks Maintenance sends extra crews to clean the park, Tellin said. She said the RAW Navy helps in other ways.

"They may notice things we might not see because they're on the water," she said.

Richards said that seeing the park from a different perspective is part of the draw for the runners to spend time on the lake. She said members enjoy the wildlife and colorful sunrises early in the morning.

"It's always so peaceful and so beautiful," she said.

They chose Monday to go kayaking because most of them run on the weekend. She said kayaking was a good way to rest their legs and still get outdoors.

The RAW group also participates in two major clean up events each year in March and November, sponsored by Keep Grapevine Beautiful, Tellin said. She is also Keep Grapevine Beautiful's executive director.

"They clean up thousands of pounds of trash," Tellin said.

The group has adopted Horseshoe Trails and they pick up litter along all of the trails they run, said current Club President Thomas "T.O." Okazaki. There are about 500 members in the club from the mid-cities area including Grapevine, Southlake, Coppell and Arlington, he said.

"We're a very diverse group, but we're very passionate about the area and giving back to the community," Okazaki said.

Richards said litter in the park is like "broken window syndrome." Once an empty house gets a broken window, more broken windows will follow. She said that's why it's so important to keep the park clean.

"The more clean we keep the area, the cleaner it will stay," she said.