

Cleaning Up Paterson's Great Falls

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By Michael Hill, Correspondent



It was an odd scene at the usually picturesque Great Falls in Paterson — no waterfall as the hydroelectric comp shut off the flow so that workers and volunteers could clean behind the 77-foot drop.

“We’re always looking for low-cost things for families to do in New Jersey. When I saw it was the 99 birthday of the National Parks Service, I was trying to find something to incorporate and had never been to the Great Falls and thought the idea of it shutting off was fantastic. Just to see that,” said Melanie Cortese of Jersey Family Fun.

Cortese brought the family and some friends.

When asked if he helps mom at home Diego Rodriguez said, “sometimes. Sometimes.”

“I would like to clean up the falls to do some good work,” said Katie Cortese.

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Other cleanup crews included workers from the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission. They gingerly stepped on algae covered rocks more slippery than ice. They cut fallen tree limbs and then hauled them away. They also pulled a mattress and this boat from the low water.

As the crews do their work you would say be amazed, or perhaps disappointed, at what they typically find.

“Absolutely. Everyday we do this job. It’s disappointing to see what people throw away into local waterways. It’s really amazing. It’s sad,” said River Restoration Manager Brian Davenport.

“We saw a goose and he had a plastic bag stuck around his leg and it was really sad to see. This is what litter does. It affects the animals and wildlife that’s actually here,” said Ebonee Jackson.

“It’s just a really sad thing because the thing that they don’t understand is that they’re harming their image. They’re from Paterson and they’re making themselves look bad by littering,” said Bryan Diaz.

Jackson and Diaz are members of the Great Falls Youth Corps under the umbrella of the New Jersey Community Development Corporation. State Farm gave the corporation \$15,000 so it could keep doing what Ebonee and Bryan have done this summer — here and in California — educate the public and clean and landscape the nation’s parks.

“If you’re an engaged student and you care about the environment and the atmosphere that you’re in, you’re going to actually want to do something to make a change,” Jackson said.

During the hours after the cleanup, visitors came but some left disappointed that they didn’t see what usually looks like a mini-Niagara Falls at this national treasure that some too often trash.

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