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Dirty Work

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For 15 years, some work by University of Dayton civil engineering students has been destined for the trash heap. Although not glamorous, the state of Ohio appreciates their efforts.

The Ohio Department of Transportation District 7 honored the University's chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers for its involvement with the Adopt-A-Highway program.

Groups of 15 to 20 students have gathered twice a year since 1995 to clean up a stretch of Ohio State Route 4 near Germantown to pick up litter. The groups usually gather about 30 trash bags of litter in a two-hour stint, according to group leader Riad Alakkad.

"It is most unusual how much trash people dump onto the highways," said Alakkad, who also is an assistant dean in the University of Dayton School of Engineering.

Alakkad said most of the litter the group finds is fast food containers. But, it also has found iPod cases and electronic circuit boards.

Eight participants from the original group still participate in the University's efforts 15 years later.

"These environmental stewards are role models to the community for their commitment to litter removal," ODOT officials said in a press release. "ODOT, District 7, expresses its sincere gratitude and appreciation for this group's service and dedication."

ODOT estimates it spends an average of $5 million annually specifically on litter removal. Each group that adopts a highway saves ODOT approximately $800 in litter pick-up costs per year.

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