

Cleaning up your act can help the environment

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While many of us have completed our spring cleaning for the year, it's important not to forget about cleaning for the environment. Not only will you be helping to protect the environment, but you can also help to protect your families, pets and even local wildlife while outdoors this summer.

There are several small tasks you can add to your cleaning to-do list that can quickly reduce the potential for polluting the environment. Clearing out old cleaning supplies and vehicle maintenance materials reduces the risk of chemicals reaching the environment through leaks and broken or tipped over containers. Try to store any remaining cleaning supplies, oils or chemicals indoors.

Take a look around your yard for potential pollutants. Litter can pollute the environment, particularly if it flows into storm drains and ends up in local streams. According to a San Diego State University study on the toxicity of cigarette butts to marine and freshwater fish, cigarette butts are especially harmful to the environment as they are the number one littered item in the world; there are an estimated 4.5 trillion butts thrown away every year, which may introduce over 4,000 chemicals to the environment.

Pet waste is another culprit of water quality pollution. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "pet waste contributes nitrogen, phosphorus, parasites and bacteria to water bodies when it is not disposed of properly." These contaminants pollute runoff and negatively impact plant and aquatic species. Not only does pet waste pollute bodies of water, but it can also spread diseases to other animals and humans, so be sure to scoop the poop whenever you walk your dog.

There are also many environmentally-friendly lawn care methods to consider. According to the Chesapeake Bay Program, "fertilizer and pest control products contribute to

Help the environment; practice eco-friendly cleaning:

> Wash your car at a facility where the polluted wash water is managed and treated instead of running off the driveway and directly into storm drains and streams. If you do wash your car at home, use biodegradable, phosphate-free soaps and wash it on gravel or grass instead of pavement.

> Recycle as much as you can! Most paper, plastic, glass, and metal items can be recycled. Also consider donating items such as electronics and clothing so that they can be used again.

> Take used chemicals, oils, paints, fertilizers, pesticides and other unused chemicals to a local household hazardous waste drop off area.

> Use environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, including reusable materials such as a mop instead of a device with disposable pads; use rags instead of paper towels.

> Use less! For example, for home improvement projects, use an online paint calculator to calculate the amount of paint you'll need, which can reduce the amount of used paint you need to dispose and save you money.

'dead zones' that form in the Bay each summer: large areas of the Bay where fish, crabs and other life are unable to exist." It is important to apply the smallest amount of pesticides and fertilizers necessary to reduce the potential risk of these dead zones. Be sure to read the directions for these chemicals to make sure you use the right product for the job and use only the amount necessary. Returning grass clippings to the lawn can also reduce the amount of fertilizer needed, as they will get recycled back into the soil and are a valuable source of nutrients. Use a mulching blade on your lawnmower to help this process.

Using rain barrels to collect water for watering your garden plants is another great way to help protect the environment, and it can lower your water bill. Just don't leave the water uncovered as mosquitoes use still water to lay their eggs.

Next time you are in a cleaning mood, consider changing your methods a bit or adding a few of these items to your to-do list and help protect not only the local environment and water quality, but your families, pets and community as well.

Calling all retirees: JBM-HH Military Retiree Council seeks local retiree participation



PHOTO BY NELL KING

Active duty service members, military retirees and veterans dance to music aboard the Odyssey Cruise Ship Nov. 24, 2015, during the 14th annual Thanksgiving Cruise down the Potomac River. The Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Military Retiree Council is actively seeking military retirees in the National Capital Region to participate in council activities.

By Ray LaPlante
Chair, Communications
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Retiree Council

Retired in northern Virginia? There are over 140,000 military retirees in Virginia, with a large percentage of them in northern Virginia. This is a popular place to retire because of its almost unlimited resources that can satisfy most any hobby or outside interest. There are also many historical, cultural and recreational sites inside and just outside the D.C. beltway, not to mention the excellent medical care and base facilities for retirees.

Regardless of what you are doing once retired in the area, I strongly encourage you to look into the JBM-HH Military Retiree Council. The council meets quarterly to share information on activities on JBM-HH and information regarding retiree benefits. It is also an excellent venue to network, enabling you to reach out

to any point of contact who might be of some benefit to you and your family. The council is also interested in what insights and skills you may have that could benefit others. Your input is appreciated.

If you think you might be interested, simply send me an email at rc-sail@hotmail.com. Make sure the subject line is JBM-HH Military Retiree Council or something similar.

I can provide you with further information, answer questions you may have, or at least guide you to the right source. You may also attend one of our meetings, where you will meet some great folks, both retirees and non-retirees who are in key positions at JBM-HH. If interested, you can also request to become a member of the council and participate as much or as little as you wish. Staying in touch with the military community as it changes in this area can be extremely beneficial to you and your family and can spark new avenues of interest.

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Look for our event guide in Fells Point, Locust Point, and the Inner Harbor the week of the event!

