

TEN CITIES SHARE GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS FUNDING

Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB) is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to educating and engaging Texans to take responsibility for improving their community environment. For almost 50 years, KTB has focused primarily on three major areas: litter prevention, beautification, and waste reduction. KTB has the largest environmental and community improvement network in the state, comprised of more than 390 affiliates. These affiliate communities are often led by dedicated volunteers who organize community cleanups, offer free workshops for residents on conservation and waste reduction initiatives, and provide educational opportunities to schools and other community groups. Some affiliates are a recognized arm of local government while others originate in chambers of commerce, economic development councils, or parks boards. Through the tireless efforts of these community leaders, Keep Texas Beautiful's programs have the potential to reach some 21 million Texans every year.

KTB affiliates receive funding and in-kind donations, totaling \$270,000 in 2015, and the benefits don't end there. KTB staff delivers free regional trainings, web-based seminars, and an annual conference where attendees can learn, share best practices, and network with volunteer leaders and government officials from across the state. Affiliates also enjoy access to KTB's partner agencies, including Keep America Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). Free cleanup supplies, signs, and volunteer incentives are just a few more examples of the countless benefits available to affiliate communities.

"Before we became a KTB affiliate, we were really on our own in Van Alstyne. We would host the occasional community cleanup or plant a few trees, but we had no direction," said Judy Womack, affiliate coordinator for Keep Van Alstyne Beautiful. "When we connected to KTB and TxDOT, we realized that cleanups and planting are just the beginning. Becoming a KTB affiliate gave us the direction that we sought. Finally, there was someone to call for support, guidelines to follow for growing our program, and a concrete plan for success."

"Keep Allen Beautiful has a robust volunteer project," said Josué Diaz, City of Allen education specialist. "We're able to mobilize a lot of people because people recognize that we're trying to keep Allen beautiful. Other organizations are willing to partner with us on everything from small cleanups to large citywide projects. That's got to be the key to success: people working together."

KTB has partnered with TxDOT to support the depart-

ment's anti-litter and beautification programs such as Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off and the Governor's Community Achievement Awards (GCAA). The GCAA is open to all Texas communities, and winners share \$2 million in landscape funding to be used for improvements along state rights-of-way. The program has recognized outstanding communities for more than 47 years, with TxDOT providing landscaping funds since 1986.

This year's GCAA award winners have been announced and their work is impressive. GCAA applicants are divided into population categories and evaluated in seven areas: community leadership and coordination, education, public awareness, litter prevention and cleanup, litter law and illegal dumping enforcement, beautification and property improvement, and solid waste management.

Read more about 2016 Governor's Community Achievement Award-winning communities, and then connect with KTB to get involved in the mission to make Texas the cleanest, most beautiful state in the nation. KTB is hosting a free webinar on September 8, 2016 where program leadership will discuss the benefits of affiliation and why there has never been a better time to become a part of the KTB affiliate network! Visit www.ktb.org to learn more about the GCAA and becoming a KTB affiliate.

SOMERVILLE

**Category 1: Population up to 3,000
Landscape Award: \$90,000**



Though smaller than most Texas cities, Somerville's natural beauty, tranquil trails and waterways, and business-friendly

culture create a larger-than-life appeal. As the city plays host to anglers, hikers, and the quintessential crowd of winter Texans, its residents gather regularly for neighborhood cleanups throughout the year. Keep Somerville Beautiful (KSB) organized Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off and Great American Cleanup events at 13 separate locations, known collectively as Somerville's Spring into Clean initiative. In 2015, nearly 200 volunteers collected 8,715 pounds of litter and debris, 1,344 pounds of recyclables, and 710 pounds of household hazardous waste. As a result of unprecedented flooding, the city was forced to divert resources to repair damaged roadways and remove debris. In the following months, KSB volunteers and partners contributed 2,715 hours of beautification work, removing even more debris, installing concrete benches, controlling mosquito populations, and repairing damaged structures in flooded areas. Because of these efforts, Somerville today is a shining example of big Texas pride in a small Texas town.

VAN ALSTYNE

Category 2: Population 3,001-5,500

Landscape Award: \$110,000



Van Alstyne is the perfect blend of tradition and innovation, a small Texas town that maintains its old-fashioned charm while charting a strong path forward into the future. Driven by a passion to preserve the beauty of their small city, the citizens of Van Alstyne work together to ensure that their parks and streets remain clean and inviting as increasing numbers of Texans flock to the area. Keep Van Alstyne Beautiful hosts beautification events throughout the year. Volunteers removed more than 23,000 pounds of trash and recyclables during the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off and other events. All in all, waste reduction efforts in Van Alstyne diverted some 820,000 pounds of material from landfills in 2015. As the greater North Texas area continues to expand, it is this dedication that will guarantee the continued success of Keep Van Alstyne Beautiful for years to come.

CUERO

Category 3: population 5,501-9,000

Landscape Award: \$130,000



Painted with magnificent displays of wildflowers and vast swaths of ranchland, Cuero is home to 6,841 proud and active Texans. While the city has experienced both heavy rain and searing drought over the last several years, residents and community leaders have worked together to keep the city's roads and waterways clear of litter and other debris. In 2015, Keep Cuero Beautiful and the City of Cuero celebrated the rollout of curbside recycling for residents. In its first three months, this new development collected 121,600 pounds of recyclable materials and found many residents asking the city for extra recycling bins. During the same year, Cuero's public schools recycled more than 200,000 pounds of paper and plastics. Initial projected savings to the city of Cuero from recycling programs are expected to top \$50,000 per year. Fighting litter can be tough for small towns along major highways, but Cuero's determined network of volunteers and city leaders have stood up to the challenge time and again.

BOERNE

Category 4: 9,001-15,000

Landscape Award: \$160,000



Civic pride and community engagement are mainstays of Boerne's culture, with volunteers turning out for events year round. Bolstered by a passionate KTB affiliate in Keep Boerne Beautiful and an enterprising city government, the citizens of Boerne have remained committed year after year to the continued growth of their charming Texas locale. In 2015, more than 300 people signed up to restore Boerne's crown jewel, Cibolo Creek. Volunteers maintained more than three miles of trail, removing invasive plant species in order to preserve the sensitive ecological environment along the banks of the creek. In spite of heavy rain and flooding, nearly 600 volunteers showed up for the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off, cleaning up trash and removing debris from Boerne's roads and waterways. Keep Boerne Beautiful and the citizens of Boerne are the epitome of resilience.

ANGLETON

Category 5: Population 15,001-25,000
Landscape Award: \$180,000



Visitors often note the seven-story statue of Stephen F. Austin that greets them on their way into Angleton, but it is the larger-than-life hometown pride of Angleton's citizens that has truly put the city on the map. Keep Angleton Beautiful (KAB) coordinates thousands of local volunteers at events throughout the year, which is quite a feat for this affiliate's small staff. KAB relies on regional partnerships and collaborations with other nonprofits and affiliates to maintain the countless programs that it manages throughout the city. A collaboration with Keep Brazoria County Beautiful collected 67,407 pounds of electronic waste, and more than 500 volunteers collected five tons of trash and debris at the 18th annual Angleton Spring Cleanup. Because of the unwavering dedication of citizens and city leaders alike, Angleton is cleaner than ever.

LUFKIN

Category 6: Population 25,001-40,000
Landscape Award: \$210,000



East Texas is known for its towering pines, and nowhere are they more magnificent than in Lufkin. With Angelina National Forest and Sam Rayburn Reservoir only a stone's throw to the east, this blossoming Texas city offers countless outdoor attractions to visitors and residents alike. In 2015, hundreds of volunteers participated in the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off, Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day, Lufkin's Annual Tire Reclamation and Electronic Collection Day, and numerous other cleanup events. In addition to hundreds of bags of trash, these volunteers collected some 70,000 pounds of electronic waste, 50 tons of hazardous household chemicals, 15,000 pounds of scrap auto parts, and roughly 5,000 used car tires, the rubber from which was repurposed for use on local playgrounds and running tracks. As more and more visitors flock to the region each year seeking a bit of serenity, they are sure to find pristine pinewood forests and clean, refreshing waterways, all thanks to the unending commitment of the people of Lufkin.



NORTH RICHLAND HILLS

Category 7: Population 40,001-65,000

Landscape Award: \$250,000



As North Richland Hills (NRH) continues to expand and attract new business and residents, its citizens are working harder than ever to preserve their parks, waterways, and other natural resources. Known as the "City of Choice," there's no question why 63,343 Texans have made NRH their home. Residents are active and engaged when opportunities arise to get involved in the community. Keep North Richland Hills Beautiful (KNRHB) coordinated hundreds of volunteers at dozens of cleanup events in 2015. At the annual Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off, more than 300 volunteers collected 2,250 pounds of litter. KNRHB also spearheaded a Texas Recycles Day flea market, two paper shredding events, and an electronic recycling collection event that netted more than three tons of used electronics. KNRHB focuses heavily on public awareness of community waste reduction efforts, the local graffiti abatement program, and the continued expansion of city recycling services to all residents. With the support of residents and officials alike, the future of North Richland Hills is sure to be bright and prosperous.



ALLEN

Category 8: Population 65,001-90,000

Landscape Award: \$270,000



The City of Allen is one of the fastest growing communities in Texas. Located just north of Dallas along Highway 75, Allen is home to 82,246 Texans and celebrates its high rate of home ownership, exemplary schools, and a wide variety of shopping and entertainment selections. Keep Allen Beautiful (KAB), the environmental voice for the City of Allen, works hand-in-hand with city officials and partner organizations efforts to reduce waste and fight litter across the city. KAB distributed almost 500 trees in 2015, and many more were planted by the city. City hall was converted to native and water-conscious landscaping, and volunteers constructed butterfly gardens for elderly citizens. A program that helps low-income and other disadvantaged residents make home improvements resulted in an average property value increase of \$12,000 for homes in the program. The city's clean streets, beautiful parks, and peaceful neighborhoods are the result of thousands of citizens coming together each year and working toward a common goal: a cleaner, more beautiful Allen.

MCKINNEY

Category 9: Population 90,001-180,000

Landscape Award: \$290,000



McKinney is a city that has embraced the challenges of tremendous growth while retaining its historic roots. Known for excellent schools, friendly neighborhoods, and a strong economy, McKinney was recently named number one place to live by *Money Magazine*. The public outreach efforts of Keep McKinney Beautiful (KMB) draws hundreds of residents to volunteer events every year. Beyond outreach, a series of educational events called McKinney's Green Seminars have been very successful in training residents on green living. More than 600 participants attended seminars on rainwater harvesting, composting, vegetable gardening, efficient irrigation, water conservation, and more. The city's household hazardous waste (HHW) program increased 20 percent in 2015,

gathering 15,690 gallons of HHW products. Shred Day netted 24,000 pounds of paper, and more than 29.6 million pounds of recyclables were processed at McKinney's Materials Recovery Facility, the first LEED-certified MRF in the United States. With such a high level of community pride and a constantly increasing quality of life, McKinney is certain to continue its reign as one of the best places to live in America.



PLANO

Category 10: 180,001+

Landscape Award: \$310,000



Plano is the ninth largest city in Texas, where nearly 275,000 Texans live and work. With a projected 10,000 new residents moving to the city over the next five years, Plano prides itself on its ability to provide first class services and opportunities to its ever-growing population. Plano's Sustainability and Environmental Services Division (SEED) and Environmental Waste Services (EWS) have developed an active network of partners that ensure the City of Plano meets its goals of reducing litter and waste in the community. An assortment of community cleanup events in Plano drew 3,600 volunteers, who removed more than 15 tons of litter from hundreds of locations. Combined, these dedicated teams cleared 427 miles of roadways and trails and 175 miles of creeks and streams. An additional 1,411 volunteers cleaned up 18,460 tons of litter during the Don't mess with Texas Trash-Off. The outstanding efforts by the city government and citizens of Plano to reduce waste and beautify their city are in a class of their own. ★