

# Richmond Confidential

## Richmond volunteers valiantly participate in Coastal Cleanup Day



County Supervisor John Gioia has organized and sponsored Richmond's Coastal Cleanup Day for the past 24 years. (Photo by Bonnie Chan)



Richmond city employees show Chris Gioia, son of County Supervisor John Gioia, how to operate a truck lift to dispose of heavy trash items found during Coastal Cleanup Day. (Photo by Bonnie Chan)

By Brett Murphy and Bonnie Chan

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Droves of cleanup volunteers came by land and sea to comb the jagged rocks, sand and grass of Richmond Bay Trail for the 24th annual Coastal Cleanup Day Saturday morning.

The 400-strong Richmond contingent of California Coastal Cleanup Day — a statewide volunteer effort — fanned out along two miles of shoreline, from Shimada Friendship Park to Point Isabel, trash bags and buckets in hand.

A fleet of more than a dozen kayakers and canoeists known as the Flotsam Flotilla joined to sweep debris — bottle caps, juice boxes, fast food wrappers, even car tires — from parts of the Richmond Harbor inaccessible by land.

“Mindless waste is way, way too ubiquitous in our culture,” said Linda Hunter, executive director of the Watershed Project, who co-sponsored the event along with County Supervisor John Gioia and the City of Richmond.

Gioia began organizing a Richmond site for Coastal Cleanup Day in 1991 with a group of his fellow Marina Bay residents. Now, every third Saturday of September, hundreds of volunteers from Richmond join the statewide effort. Last year, 58,000 volunteers plucked 750,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from beaches, lakes, and waterways across California.

International Coastal Cleanup Day is touted as the largest single-day volunteer event in the world.

The Richmond volunteers hail from a range of Contra Costa County groups, companies, and organizations, including Boy and Girl Scouts, corporate volunteers, church groups, and high schools.

Gioia said that Coastal Cleanup Day is a great way for youth to learn stewardship of the environment. The day is “as much about education as it is about cleanup,” Gioia said.

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Despite volunteers' enthusiasm for gathering large debris like tires and contaminated wood, it's small plastic pieces that pose a greater hazard to marine life, Gioia said. In past years, more than five and a half tons of debris has been collected from the Richmond shoreline on a single Coastal Cleanup Day, most of it fast food containers and plastic items.

"You really get a sense for how plastic never goes away," Gioia said. "It just gets smaller and smaller."

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