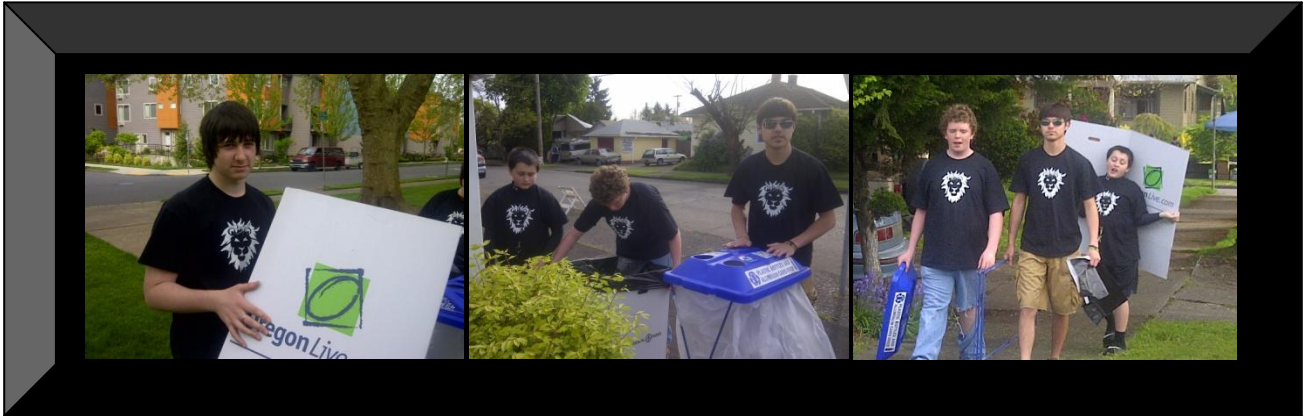


# Lions of Judah Serve Their Community

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This last May 14<sup>th</sup> the St. Johns community held an annual event called the St. Johns Parade. This event attracts well over 10,000 viewers and participants. It is an event that provides a way to connect with the people of our community and celebrate the different groups that serve the peninsula. In addition to the parade the community also organizes a festival called the St. Johns Bizarre that continues until 6pm in the square at the heart of downtown St. Johns. At the Bizarre several bands are scheduled to perform along with many vendors selling food and other products.

As fun as all these events were for the people of St. Johns, when that many people get together it produces lots of garbage! That is where the Lions of Judah, who recognized a huge need the organizers of these events had, came in and volunteered to handle all the trash produced.

Starting at 7am Saturday morning 11 boys and 2 adult leaders of the Lions began placing 40 fold out trash boxes and 40 recycling units. These trash units were placed at the parade staging area, along the 1.2 mile parade route, and the location of the bizarre in the downtown area. 12 hours later this team of young men had monitored, patrolled, and policed up all trash and recycling materials that amounted to filling a 10 yard dumpster.

The Lions only had the luxury of two adults to help lead this trash operation for 3 of the 12 hours needed to complete the job. The young men in the Lions range from 10-17 years old and the older boys make up a Youth Leadership Team (YLT). From the beginning the YLT was allowed to be a part of the planning and strategy for the operation. This helped those key leaders to be tuned into the mission well enough to lead in the absence of one adult leader.

Throughout the day I was told by the event organizers and several others, thank you for the work we did, and that we did a great job. Another group of 20 youth and 5 adults from a local school were recruited to show up at 5pm to help clean the parade route and assist with the cleanup of the bizarre area. Their leader came to me after surveying the route/ bizarre and said that the area was so clean their group had little to do and wondered if I knew of a location that could use their assistance. Around 6pm I was approached by a lady who had seen the boys doing their work since the morning hours. She went out of her way to find me so that she could tell me her observations of the boys. Initially, she thought they were contracted as professionals to do the work and she questioned one of our 17 year old crew leaders to ask him what outfit he worked for. He told her we were a youth club volunteering. She was flabbergasted and said that the boys carried themselves very well and did a great job. One longtime organizer of the parade said this is the cleanest the route has ever been!

The mission of the Lions is to help boys grow into men and has been in existence for a little over 2 years. Last year we implemented the YLT and have put over 75 hours of time training them to be leaders. Philosophically this program believes that when high expectations are made the boys will respond by rising to the expectations. They rise primarily due to the respect they experience when given the opportunity to do important work.

The boys are often told after a meeting, "What a wise investment they are making by being here each week!" We all do something with our time but some actions produce greater results than others. What kinds of results are produced by a boy who decides to get involved with the Lions of Judah? Yes we see, if developed properly, that a band of youth with little adult supervision can accomplish a mission that would be a challenge even for an older group. Sweeter than that, we see boys who are learning how to problem solve, work together as team, and condition their hearts & minds to see themselves more as servants who are capable of effectively addressing the needs of others, rather than being self-focused consumers. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 the Lions of Judah and the community of St. Johns got to taste some of the fruit produced from that type of investment.

The boys are not the only ones who have made this wise investment. For all those who have either invested their time, finances, or both to the work that this group is doing in the lives of those boys let this be an encouragement to you. Thank you for your investment and I hope you are pleased with the dividends that are coming from the commitment you've made to the Lions.

It is the vision of this program to see people become very familiar with the taste of this kind of fruit being produced by the vast majority of the men living in our community!



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