

## BEACH CLEAN UP VOLUNTEERS FLOOD INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK ON SATURDAY

A record crowd of over 95 community volunteers of all ages from young children to seniors arrived at Indiana Dunes State Park (East Side) this past Saturday for the annual Adopt-A-Beach cleanup day from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. sponsored by Shirley Heinze Land Trust and NiSource/NISPCO. It was part of the annual September Adopt-a-Beach Cleanup, organized by the Alliance for the Great Lakes as part of the International Coastal Cleanup.

Beach cleanups were held all along the Indiana Lake Michigan shore as well as along shorelines in Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin as part of the Alliance for the Great Lakes annual September Adopt-a-Beach™ event. Each year Adopt-a-Beach™ participants pick up litter and record findings, to be entered later into a growing regional database that is central to the Alliance's clean beaches education campaign. Beach litter is more than unsightly, it's dangerous. Small children play with cigarette butts, fish are entangled in balloons, and birds trap their beaks in discarded food packaging.

Volunteers come from all walks of life including, businesses, schools, and community groups," remarks Shandra Niswander, Development Coordinator of Shirley Heinze Land Trust and a co-sponsor of the beach cleanup event for the third year in a row. "The one thing they all have in common is their love for the Great Lakes and their commitment to help keep them clean, she noted." Ms. Niswander was particularly encouraged by a group of employees from Coca-Cola Enterprise in Portage who created their own Adopt-A Beach t-shirts and came prepared with snacks and overflowing enthusiasm for the beach litter pick up project. Angie Heldt, Coordinator of Coca-Cola's newly created Corporate Responsibility Sustainability Initiative remarked that her employees "were excited to be a part of the Adopt A Beach program this year and are looking for more partnerships with community groups." For local non-profits interested in exploring volunteer partnerships with Coca-Cola, contact Angie Heldt at 219-762-5000 or [anheldt@cokecce.com](mailto:anheldt@cokecce.com). Another local business, Best Buy of Valparaiso sent employees to participate in the volunteer project. Richard Fox, General Manager of the store was happy to lead the effort and noted this was the company's second year of participation in the beach cleanup effort. Other companies represented by employee volunteers included ArcelorMittal and NiSource/NIPSCO. Local corporations weren't the only ones represented at the Adopt-A-Beach event. David Kenning's Valparaiso Earth Awareness Student Club members were combing the beaches for litter and recyclables as well as a local church and Eagle Scout group from Hammond.

As part of the world's largest shoreline cleanup, volunteers in the September Adopt-a-Beach™ event clear lakeshores of thousands of pounds of trash in a single day. In 2008, 6,194 volunteers removed 24,698 pounds of trash from beaches and shorelines in Michigan, Indiana and Illinois. At this year's beach cleanup at Indiana Dunes State Park, volunteers picked up an approximately 100 lbs of litter and 75 lbs. of recyclable items including glass, plastic and aluminum cans and bottles.

The top three types of litter removed from Indiana Dunes State Park included cigarette filters (2,148); caps and lids (573); and finally, food wrappers and containers (439). In addition to litter pick-up and monitoring, Adopt-a-Beach™ teams and volunteers collect valuable data on our beaches through water quality testing and science-based beach observations. This information is used on a site-by-site basis to improve beach conditions.

Shandra Niswander, Development Coordinator at Shirley Heinze Land Trust remarks, "our organization was proud to partner with NiSource/NIPSCO this year for the Adopt-A-Beach program. It is a special day for community members to come out and help protect and beautify the Great Lakes Shoreline." Since 1981, Shirley Heinze Land Trust has protected,

preserved and restored ecologically significant and sensitive natural lands in Lake, LaPorte and Porter counties. To learn more about its properties and volunteer opportunities, visit [www.heinzetrust.org](http://www.heinzetrust.org), call (219) 879-4725, or e-mail [land@heinzetrust.org](mailto:land@heinzetrust.org)

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#### Photos

**Photo 1:** Ava Penziol, four year old daughter of John Penziol, a NiSource employee, poses with some of the litter and debris she collected at the Adopt A Beach on Saturday at Indiana Dunes State Park.

**Photo 2:** Ava Penziol, four year old daughter of John Penziol, a NiSource employee, makes a sour face to the camera after helping to collect litter at the Adopt A Beach on Saturday at Indiana Dunes State Park.

**Photo 3:** Coca-Cola Enterprise employee volunteers from Portage gather after participating in the 2009 Adopt-A-Beach cleanup effort.

**Photo 4:** Dan Plath and John Penziol, both NiSource employees (far right) who brought along their young children to help with the beach cleanup, pose with a host of volunteers of varying ages at Indiana Dunes State Park.

**Photo 5:** Richard Fox, General Manager of Best Buy in Valparaiso (far right) poses with the Coca-Cola volunteer group after a morning of collecting and recording litter at the Indiana Dunes State Park beach.

**Photo 6:** Hammond Scout Troop 221 volunteers relax beside all the litter and recyclables collected after an intensive beach cleanup effort at the Indiana Dunes State Park on Saturday.