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News Release

For Immediate Release

City to train volunteers for sign removal project

Signs, signs. Everywhere are signs.

Whether they're advertising a yard sale on the outer edge of a public sidewalk or an in-home day care on a utility pole, signs in public rights-of-way are prohibited by Springfield City Code Section 98-7 to ensure visibility for drivers and to reduce litter.

Public right-of-way is usually defined as the area from the street curb to the outer edge of a public sidewalk. Signs and advertisements on utility poles are also prohibited.

For the fourth year, the City of Springfield will train volunteers on sign removal in public rights-of-way. The next session will take place at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 4 in room L45 of the Busch Municipal Building, 840 Boonville Ave.

Bob and Donna, a retired Springfield couple that prefer not to use their last name, are two of nearly 50 citizens the City has trained in illegal sign removal. The couple has picked up 2,194 signs since 2010.

"From the time we moved here in 2005 until the City offered training in 2010, they just seemed to be at every intersection and on every utility pole," Bob says. "We always lamented that it looked like heck and we wished we were allowed to tear them down. When we saw an article in the paper that the City was asking for volunteers to tear them down, we went to the training."

On average, Bob says he and Donna go on sign-removing expeditions about every 10 days, even through the winter. They drive all over town removing illegal signs that advertise fencing, lawn care, "I buy homes," "I buy junk," carpet cleaning, windows, fitness training, walk-in tubs and more.

"We try to go early in the morning on a Saturday or a Sunday because there isn't a lot of traffic at that time," Bob says. "We actually enjoy it because we get offended that these knuckleheads think they can put their junk anywhere they want. It's just so unsightly and distracting, plus the utility poles get damaged from the nails and screws used to attach the signs."

The couple dispose of the signs in their trash bins at home because they discovered the owners of the signs were retrieving them from the Dumpster at the Public Works Operations Center and putting them back up in public rights-of-way.

"I would use a utility knife and cut these signs into several pieces before throwing them in the Dumpster. A few days later we'd be out and I'd see the exact same signs back up ... it just galled me to no end," Donna says.

Once trained, volunteers conduct sign removal on their own time. As they keep an eye on illegal signs and other beautification issues, volunteers may also report other concerns such as broken curbs, potholes, graffiti, dead animals, trash and tall weeds. Volunteers assisting the City must be at least 18 years of age and are required to sign a release form.

For more information, contact: Collin Quigley, Assistant City Manager, (417) 864-1116.