



# **Rusty Wheat: A Difference Maker With His County Litter Cleanup Efforts**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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EDWARDSVILLE - Area resident Rusty Wheat has been on a mission to clean up Madison County and because of his on-hand efforts and visits to Madison County Commission meetings and more, he is a difference maker.



# Difference Makers

*of the Riverbend*

On Earth Day, he had several turn out for a cleanup effort, including multiple Madison County Board members.

"We had Mayors, the County Chairman, Board members from the City of Roxana and Madison County, we had firemen, policemen, one high school student, local residents, some board members and city municipal workers all working together," he said of the Earth Day effort. "Roxana provided a trash truck, and a police presence to keep everyone safe. "

Wheat continued and said when he was younger, there were a lot of commercials on TV about being responsible and picking up trash, but that doesn't happen as much anymore and he thinks it should.

"I had trash trucks going by my home all the time and I asked if they would come out and clean out the road and they sent out a crew before COVID but I didn't get anywhere," Wheat said. "I started writing board members, the police, the House of Representatives and appeared before the board and demanded they do something about Madison County."

Wheat also adopted a section of Highway 143 and Madison Avenue and Wanda Road.



Madison County's Kurt Prenzler then designated \$200,000 to start enforcing the trucks that were polluting the area. Wheat claims the box trucks were often not secure.



When the police provide more enforcement, it seems the trucks start being a lot more responsible, Wheat said.

Wheat commended Madison County Board member Allison Lamothe for reaching out to him and assisting with the Madison County Earth Day cleanup. "More than 100 bags of trash were collected in this multi-level effort," Wheat said.



“Mark Bacus, and the Shine Like Spencer group had no idea we were looking for help in our clean-up efforts, and they were looking for help themselves to clean up their adopted highway section of Highway 255,” Bacus said. “They clean a sector to celebrate son Spencer’s passing on April 22. “How the two groups go together is such a coincidence, we cannot explain it,” Bacus said. “I appreciate the efforts they have done in his honor, and we look forward to working with them again in the future.”

Rusty feels his meeting with the Bacus family and discussion of additional litter removal projects had to come from a higher power and he said he was very thankful for the friendship.

Mark and Debbie Bacus have established a Shine Like Spencer Kindness Award and other projects to keep his memory alive. Spencer was a 2012 graduate of Roxana High



School who died in 2018. He had a rare form of cancer. Rusty said, "Everyone who knew Spencer loved him and knew of his kindness and caring nature." Each year a Roxana student receives the Shine Like Spencer Kindness Scholarship Award.

Wheat adopted a section of Highway 143. He cleans the area in honor of his brother, David, who was killed by a drunk driver 45 years ago.

"This area being littered with trash always bothered me, one day picking up in this area it occurred to me that this was the exact spot where my brother was killed," he said. "The guy that killed him got off on a technicality, so I applied for this section and was approved by the state."

"I am going to continue with my efforts in his honor."

Rusty has a deep passion for these litter cleanup efforts and should be commended for the difference he is making. It seems that effort appears to be growing with each day because of his outspoken and consistent approach.

Anyone who wants to contact Rusty and join his efforts can call him at (618) 670-6804.

*If you have a community Difference Maker story for [riverbender.com](http://riverbender.com) or [edglentoday.com](http://edglentoday.com), e-mail it to [news@riverbender.com](mailto:news@riverbender.com). Include information about the person or organization, a photo, and the phone number of someone to contact.*









