



# **Community Difference Makers: Group Holds Successful Cleanup Day and Donates Resources To Other Civic Efforts**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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EAST ALTON/WOOD RIVER - Woodrow Peterson and his group the Backpack Bandits have been busy recently with a massive Community Cleanup in October. Peterson also saw a request from the Madison Police Department when they didn't have any additional NARCAN for patrol officers and he helped fulfill that urgent need with a donation of 20 cases.

NARCAN is a nasal spray designed to rapidly reverse the effects of a life-threatening opioid emergency.

The recent Community Cleanup Day in East Alton and Wood River were very successful, Peterson said.

He also commended the East Alton-Wood River High School volunteers who showed up to help. He singled out Ed Ringering, the former East Alton Street Department director, for his help with a tractor during the cleanup.

“Some of the grass was five feet tall,” he said, but with the tractor and all the volunteer help, they were able to attack and remove it.

The cleanup group addressed the needs of an elderly person in the area and it made such a difference for that family, he said and they were most appreciative.

Peterson has also passed out rapid HIV tests to those who need them as another community service effort.

The East Alton volunteer said he has been a construction worker his whole life and he uses some of those skills in the various community projects.

“I started the Backpack Bandits Facebook page a couple of years ago and it has gotten bigger and bigger,” he said. “Hopefully people outside of here can learn from what I am doing and put that forth in other communities. We have about 1,600 members on the page, 1,100 anonymous members.”









Peterson mentioned that his present plan is to make a bid for East Alton Village Trustee in 2025.

He said he felt this year's cleanup was definitely a success as was the one in 2022.

"We decided to clean up some spots in East Alton and Wood River," he said of this year. "We worked with Brad Wells, Wood River Police chief, with some areas he wanted to address. We wanted the younger kids to come out and help, so we tried to

keep the areas kid-friendly. If this teaches the kids to become invested in their community, we have done our job.”

Peterson encouraged residents to work more diligently cleaning up their areas and not dump trash around the area. He said there are a lot of wooded areas around East Alton and Wood River, and discarded trash attracts raccoons and skunks and helps create a negative in the areas.

He also commended the area trash personnel for doing a great job and he said he had the utmost respect for what they did.

“We just want to get more community members to pitch in and help,” he said. “It would make a big difference.”

**See Our Daily Show! interview with Peterson here:** <https://www.riverbender.com/video/details/our-daily-show-interview-the-backpack-bandits-of-wood-river-eastalton-and-alton-from-5323-video-5609.cfm>