

# East Charlotte resident helps Keep Charlotte Beautiful: National Volunteer Week

Tiffany Johnson

tiffany.johnson@charlottenc.gov

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You don't need permission to make a difference. Sometimes you just have to start. That is what Michael Haithcock did after he moved to east Charlotte and noticed there was more litter than where he previously lived within the city. He thought, "I don't know why it is the way it is, but I could do something about it." So, on his own, he began cleaning a street within his neighborhood. Shortly after he started, someone came up to him and asked "Hey, have you heard of Keep Charlotte Beautiful?" He had not but was intrigued to learn more.

After learning about the program and its Adopt-A-Street option, which allows individuals, families, neighborhoods, and businesses to take responsibility for litter removal, Michael not only adopted one street but a few. It was like a domino effect, "People saw me adopting streets and cleaning up, and I think three or four other people in Windsor Park, my neighborhood, adopted streets," he shared.

When he originally moved to east Charlotte, he had a personal goal of getting more involved in his community. Given that he was having so much fun keeping his neighborhood clean, he called the Keep Charlotte Beautiful (KCB) Program Manager to see how we could get involved with the program, which works with volunteers to help increase awareness regarding litter control and recycling and participate in community service and events to contribute to a clean environment. Luckily for him, there was an opening on the board. The program manager recommended him for a mayoral appointment, which Mayor Lyles approved. Haithcock enjoyed his time on the board so much that he participated for years, eventually serving as its board chair.

"That was kind of my beginning of getting more involved with the community was because of trash. That's how it started, because of trash," he reflected. As KCB laid the foundation for his newfound community involvement, Haithcock was able to fulfill his volunteerism goal as he became a part of the board for Charlotte East, Arts & Science Council Advisory Board, and ECCON (East Charlotte Coalition of Neighborhoods).



He wants people to know that it is not all work and no play when it comes to beautification efforts. "If you get other people involved, you start to make friends. It's community coming together. It's people feeling proud of their community and where they live, and people want to feel proud and happy and good about where they live," Haithcock said.

If you're someone who enjoys immediately seeing the fruits of their labor, then participating in KCB may also be something that brings you joy, he says of the program to encourage neighbors get involved. "This costs nothing, but makes a huge difference. You know everybody likes to see the fruits of their labor, and the fruits of their labor after cleaning something is instantaneous." For these reasons, Haithcock believes participating in the Adopt-A-Street program is a no brainer.

If you would like to be the next person, organization, or neighborhood to adopt a street to help keep our city beautiful, visit <https://charlottenc.gov/HNS/CE/KCB/Pages/Adopt-A-City-Street.aspx> (/HNS/CE/KCB/Pages/Adopt-A-City-Street.aspx) for details.

