



“It Just Makes Sense”

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WHAT DO FIREFIGHTERS AND KEEP IOWA BEAUTIFUL HAVE IN COMMON?

”Check Out the Check-off!”

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful

What do the Iowa Firemen’s Association and Keep Iowa Beautiful have in common? **ON THE SURFACE – NOT ANYTHING!** Below the surface the two entities are both interested in helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful. The Firefighters through training for firefighters, prevention programs, saving lives and by extinguishing fires in buildings or on the land – Keep Iowa Beautiful, through education and enhancement programs.

There is a well known theory called the “Broken Window” theory that simply stated says – “If you see a building with a broken window – if that window is not repaired rather quickly it sends the message that the rest of the windows are free to break’. That is normally what does happen and the building and possibly the neighborhood start to decline. Buildings with broken windows have a high potential of being areas where a fire can start due to neglect. Both organizations want to prevent the broken windows from becoming a local symbol of decline of the community.

In addition, the casual littering of a lit cigarette butt can result in a potential fire destroying the landscape vegetation and in certain instances buildings and facilities. Again both organizations want to improve and enhance the beauty of Iowa and not destroy it.

Over the past five years the Keep Iowa Beautiful Check-off administered through the Iowa Department of Transportation has been helping to enhance communities around the State through small grants. It is only possible through the generosity of Iowan's at tax time.



As Iowan's prepare their taxes or have the taxes prepared for them, there is an opportunity to provide financial support to five charitable organizations identified on line 59 of the long tax form. Look at 59 c carefully as it only says Firefighters / Keep Iowa. It does not spell out the full names of the two organizations - the Iowa Firemen's Association and Keep Iowa Beautiful.

Normally the lowest two income producers would be taken off the check-off. However, in order to remain on the check-off the legislature in the 2006 session decided to put the Iowa Firefighters Fund and Keep Iowa Beautiful together on the check-off with the revenue being shared 50 / 50.

The joining of the two on the form might tend to discourage both supporters from completing the check-off because there is no clear designation that their donation will go for the organization they wanted to support. The fact is that your donation either through a decrease in your refund or by paying additional dollars on your tax payment will help two causes that are carrying out programs to help improve the quality of life in this State. If you don't specify an amount, but simply check the donation item only \$1 will be given.

The last payment from the Department of Revenue to the Keep Iowa Beautiful Check Off Fund in the Iowa Department of Transportation was \$51,389. Of that amount 75% or \$38,542 is allocated to communities throughout Iowa in small grants for beautification and enhancement. The remaining 25% or \$12,847 is available to Keep Iowa Beautiful for education and public awareness programs. Those funds have helped support projects ranging from river clean up efforts to tree and flower planting programs. Those dollars are often the "spark" that helps stimulate local beautification efforts.

Take the time to "check off" for two great organizations.

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See you in the next column.

Helping to Keep Iowa Beautiful