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## Day laborers charge nothing to tidy up Morristown streets

### 30 volunteer with goal to show immigrants have love for their community

*By Minhaj Hassan  
Daily Record*

MORRISTOWN -- They gathered at the same spot they regularly stand early each morning, hoping to find jobs such as dry walling a home or planting a garden.

However, instead of working to make money and sending the dough back to their families in other countries, they devoted Wednesday morning to volunteering by cleaning up their community.

Holding white and black garbage bags, the 30 day laborers of traveled west on Morris Street, picking up cigarette butts and other things in front of the diner, the mechanic shop, small eateries and around the train station.

## Cross-country effort

The clean-up effort was organized by the local immigrant resource center, Wind of the Spirit, in conjunction with the National Day Laborer Organizing Network. On Wednesday, day laborers across the country did such projects as town clean-ups, painting buildings and putting in plants, network officials said.

The weather cooperated, as the sun shone and the volunteers, all men of Latin American descent, ranging between the ages of 20 and 45, crisscrossed the town picking up refuse. The men wore grey shirts reading "Echando Raices," which translates to "growing roots."

From Morris Street, they crossed onto Center Street, then up the steep driveway leading up to Headquarters Plaza, gathering up more finished cigarettes. It was then onto the outskirts of the Morristown Green and the sidewalks in front of Century 21 department store and neighboring businesses.

Sergio Morales, 28, who's originally from Guatemala, said cleaning up the town was a good experience.

"I enjoyed it," he said. "You have to take care of the place you live in."

He said he came to the United States several years ago because there were more job prospects in this country.

"Unless you live in the city (in Guatemala), there is not much out there," said Morales, who works in construction.

Another Guatemalan, Herman Peresz, 22, who came to the United States seven years ago, said the amount of trash collected was enormous.

"A lot of cigarettes and a lot of beer cans," he said, adding that living in this country provides him with enough money that he can send some back to his mother and four siblings in Guatemala.

Two passersby noticed the clean-up efforts and found it to be admirable.

"It's great to put a spotlight on them," said Elaine Johnson about the day laborers.

"I thought they were getting paid," said Suly Laspina.

Maria Vargas, a coordinator for Wind of the Spirit, said she hopes the clean-up was symbolic of the immigrants love for the United States, and especially Morristown.

"There has been an anti-immigrant climate in town, and it has been growing," she said. "Many people have moved. They just want to be a part of the community."

Mayor Donald Cresitello, well known for being outspoken on illegal immigration, said he was grateful for the work they did Wednesday.

"I certainly appreciate their efforts to keep Morristown clean," Cresitello said. "But one shouldn't forget that many of them came here illegally."

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