

Annual 'Comcast Cares Day' to cleanup downtown

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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April 30 cleanup coincides with Earth Day

From his view just outside of the back door of his business, amid a pile of litter and discarded bulk items, Knifewing Segura, CEO and founder of the Downtown Conference Center on Coal Avenue, said he can only speculate how long the debris will stay in one spot.

Hopefully, not long, Segura muses.

The Comcast cable company downtown cleanup, slated for April 30, is a step is a big help, but definitely not a cure-all.

“There are days when it’s worse than others,” Segura said. “Some people complain, but not nearly enough that should be complaining.”

Segura said the area is a hot spot for drunks and vagrants and that people dump their trash in and around the trash receptacles. Something that he and other business owners can’t take

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control of in the open alleyways.

"The alleys are really kind of bad," Segura emphasized. "I'd say that's probably what a lot of people want is to get some of the stuff in the alleys picked up and thrown away."

Each year, Comcast undertakes a massive cleanup project around Gallup, whether it be a school, a random street or in parts of downtown. The same type of cleanup project happens in communities nationwide where Comcast operates.

The cleanup is called "Comcast Cares Day."

"This is something that we do on an annual basis and not just here, but everywhere around the United States" John Ortiz, technical operations manager in Gallup for the cable company, said April 19. "It's very community-oriented. We always get a lot of people who come out and volunteer their time."

This year the company will clean, paint and generally spruce up Gallup's downtown area. Ortiz said no part of the downtown is off limits, noting that the cleanup is slated for between First and Sixth streets and the area between Aztec and Coal avenues.

Both streets are highly traveled by cars and pedestrians everyday.

From 8 am until Noon on April 30, company officials and family members of company officials will plant trees, paint over graffiti, remove debris and just make downtown look that much better, "at least cosmetically," Ortiz said.

"The area comprises the city's Business Improvement District. So this area is also set to be cleaned," Ortiz said. "There are parts of alleyways downtown that contain discarded tires, litter, furniture and junk. We'll get to everything that we can get to. We plan on being very busy this weekend."

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Downtown's top official welcomes the effort.

"I think it's something very worthwhile to do," Francis Bee, executive director of BID, said. "This is a Comcast effort. They do this every year. But the (BID) is completely on board to provide whatever support that we can."

Bee noted that he'll volunteer to do what he can regarding the cleanup come April 30. He said each of the business owners in the BID is gung-ho about the effort.

This includes longtime downtown business owner Sammy Chioda.

"I think it's a great idea," Chioda, owner and operator of Sammy C's Rock N' Sports Pub & Grille on Coal Avenue, said. "This is actually done every year. I think everybody downtown and even outside of downtown appreciates the effort."

Gallup City Councilor Allan Landavazo agreed that the downtown alleyways are frequently full of litter and trash. But, he said those areas are the responsibility of the respective property owner.

"The business owners have to pick up the trash with respect to their properties in the alleyways," Landavazo said. "That's a big part in keeping those areas clean."

Landavazo said alley maintenance has actually been listed on the city's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan for several years.

But, he said that the infrastructure plan failed to make it past Gov. Susana Martinez's chopping block.

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Landavazo explained what often times complicates things is the fact that people dig through trash looking for aluminum cans, food, and just whatever they deem valuable.

"That creates a mess," he said. "You have people going through trash. You have animals going through trash. But the alleyways have to be kept a little cleaner."

Big-picture wise, Landavazo noted that the condition of the city's alleys, minus the trash aspect, could be a little better.

Meanwhile, Ortiz said Comcast will bring its own cleaning tools and equipment for tree trimming and painting, saying when trash is collected and bundled the downtown business owners have OK'd the use of downtown dumpsters.

From a local standpoint, Ortiz said Comcast budgets around \$3,000 yearly to do the project, which includes breakfast, lunch and snacks.

Comcast Cares Day is an annual celebration of the company's year-round commitment to service and has grown to become the nation's largest single-day corporate volunteer event, Ortiz mentioned.

In 2015, he said, more than 100,000 volunteers from various places around the country improved some 900 parks, schools, beaches, senior centers and other vital community sites.

He added that since 2001, more than 700,000 Comcast NBC Universal employees, their friends, family members and community partners have volunteered more than 4 million service hours at nearly 6,800 projects in communities across the United States and around the world.

"Participating in this really is something good to do," Ortiz said. "You don't have to know

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someone. You don't have to pay anything. Just come out and start working. Food and beverages will be provided."

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