

## **Cleaning Up the Beaches for a Better Future**

In recent years, Shalun Beach in Danshui has become a popular spot for soon-to-be-wedded couples taking ‘wedding photos’ and tourists seeking a day of fun at the beach. Yet its surge in popularity has come at a price: trails of litter and leftovers that flow into the ocean and taint the natural environment.

To help save the local beaches, Tamkang this year took part in International Coastal Cleanup Day on Sept 24. As part of Tamkang’s service learning program, 135 TKU freshmen from the departments of Electrical Engineering and Management Sciences braved the heat to collect trash. The main three types of litter scooped up by the students were cigarette butts, plastic bags, and Styrofoam boxes used for fishing.

The beach cleanup activity did not just involve collecting the strewn items of trash, but also recording them on an ‘International Coastal Cleanup Card’, which documented the types of litter found, the amount of each type and their sources. Through this process, the students learned that by polluting the local beaches, we not only harm the local ecosystem but also international ecosystems, as they are all interconnected.

Before heading to the beaches, students first listened to a talk given by a speaker from the Association of Wilderness, a local Taiwanese organization that works to protect and conserve the environment. During the talk, students were shown images of hermit crabs that had lost their homes due to pollution and now took shelter in discarded items of litter.

First year Department of Electrical Engineering student, Liu Zhe-wei, stated that “this was my first time taking part in Coastal Cleanup Day activities. I used to think it was just about picking up trash. I never knew it also involved sorting the trash and recyclables into categories. During the process, I learned that the vast majority of litter came in the form of plastic bags. This type of litter doesn’ t decompose easily, and so is really bad for the environment. In future, I’ m going to start to use a recyclable material bag instead of plastic bags” .

In just one hour, the students managed to collect 369.9 kg of garbage (119.6 kg recyclable litter; 250.3 kg non-recyclable litter). The students were amazed at how much can be achieved in such little time when people work together.

In a separate service learning initiative, freshmen from the Tamsui Campus took turns in helping blind and disabled students get around the campus. They helped disabled students in wheelchairs by carefully pushing them to their destinations and guided blind students through the difficult-to-navigate sections of the campus. The initiative was designed to give TKU students a sense of the difficulties experienced by disabled and blind students on a daily basis.

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Students help classmates around the Tamsui Campus to experience the difficulties encountered by such students daily.



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