



**Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association  
Stream Cleanup Volunteer Q&A  
Jess Penetar, Kingston, NJ**

“Picking up trash may seem like a small gesture, but if we didn't do it, soon our waters would all be full of trash.” – Jess Penetar.



*Volunteer Jess Penetar, center, found a car frame at the 2010 Stream Cleanup in Plainsboro.*

**1. Why did you sign up for our Stream Cleanup? What town did you volunteer in?**

I volunteered at Plainsboro's Waters Edge Park last year. I came out because I have fond memories of doing river clean ups from when I was a girl scout. Our troop, in Massachusetts, volunteered most years to help clean a local stream and we always found such an interesting collection of dumped items. One year our treasures included a shopping cart! I also spend a lot of time outside, hiking, biking, camping, walking ect, and the last thing I want to see is trash. Not only is it an eyesore, but trash can harm animals and plants.

**2. What's one thing you learned while picking up trash and other "people pollution"?**

I think that some people actively decide to dump their trash in the woods. The larger items we found (a car frame and refrigerators for example!) did not end up there by accident. If you go to all that trouble to put it in your car and drive somewhere, why not bring it to the dump?

**3. What's one thing that surprised you during the cleanup?**

I found a car frame. I'm not talking pieces of a car I mean the entire metal chassis and possibly a piece of a door. Who knows how long it had been there. And how did it get through all the trees? I was also surprised that I didn't get any poison ivy. I climbed through a lot of it while looking for trash.

**4. Why do you think more people should take part in the cleanups with us?**

Having a clean environment is something that is so easy to take for granted. Our air is not black with smog and every time we turn on the tap, potable water comes out. I have lived in developing countries where that is not the case. We are so lucky to have these resources here, so we have to protect them. Picking up trash may seem like a small gesture, but if we didn't do it, soon our waters would all be full of trash.

**5. How did the Stream Cleanup change your outlook about our environment or you community?**

I saw the totals on your website of all the volunteers last year and the pounds of trash recovered. There were a lot of both! While it was really great to see that many people volunteering for the clean up, it's unfortunate that there was so much trash that needed picking up. There is still a lot of work to be done, but there are more people aware of environmental issues who are willing to step up and help.

*To volunteer at the Watershed Association's 2011 Stream Cleanups contact Leslie Brecknell, community advocacy coordinator, at [lbrecknell@thewatershed.org](mailto:lbrecknell@thewatershed.org) or (609) 737-3735 x30.*