



CLEAN UP THE WORLD...STARTING WITH OUR FRONTIER

For those living on the US-Mexico border conflict has long been a way of life, however cross-border disputes between the US and Mexico are being put on ice so that cities either side of the border can join together to take action to reduce the causes of climate change.

In a tale of two cities breaking down barriers for a greater good, people from Ciudad Juárez in Mexico and El Paso in the USA are banding together to make a positive difference to their local environment.



Volunteers from either side of the border lending a hand

It's not often communities either side of any border take part in united events, but proving the desire for a cleaner, healthier environment is a bond people worldwide share, more than 5000 people from the two cities donned their hats and gloves and took to the streets, parks and waterways around the border area as part of the 2007 Clean Up the World Weekend.

The border region between the two sister cities is known for its illegal crossings, drug trafficking and high crime rate and at a time when debate over the development of a fence to border the two countries is rife, it was decided a bi-national event would help shine a deserved positive light on the region so often portrayed so negatively.

The Juárez Limpio Asociación Civil is the organisation behind the event, which they expanded to include a week of activities, and the driving force behind Juárez City's aim to become the "cleanest city in all of Mexico".

Director of Industrial Relations at the Juárez Limpio Asociación Civil, Ernesto Moreno Mona, said he is hoping the 2007 event will have not only contributed to reducing the impacts of climate change in the region, but also help build stronger relationships between the two cities.



Volunteers getting their hands dirty for the Clean Up the World Weekend

"We know and are sure of the fact that joining forces leads to short and long term results," Ernesto Moreno Mona said.

"No one in isolation - not governments, global organisations nor companies - have the complete solution to these problems but together, organised communities that are conscious of the problems, causes and possible solutions can have a greater effect.

Ernesto Moreno Mona said the global campaign Australia yachtsman Ian Kiernan founded in 1993 inspired him to expand the reach of the program, which previously

Clean up the world

focused purely on the Mexican city alone.

“The Clean Up the World campaign is exactly what we needed and was the channel and the support most suitable to ensure we are all able to work together.



All hands on deck during the Clean Up the World Weekend

“The relationship between the residents of both cities is very shared. Really we live in one city that is divided by a river that marks the border. In fact, one prominent American politician once said that the Mexico-USA borderline is not where the USA ends and Mexico begins but rather that mix and join.



Is this recyclable? Kids joining in the clean up fun

“Although we are two different countries we breathe the same air, we drink the water from the same sources and in summary we live together in the same geographical region and for reasons of nature this area cannot be divided by a man made border.”

The initial cross-border event has been heralded as such a success that plans for future bi-national environmental events are already on the drawing board.

“We hope that this will be the start of a bi-national relationship which joins the two cities instead of dividing them.

“We understand that the challenge is big but we are convinced that actions such as these in a world of showcasing will have better results and impact with the promotion of these values in our border communities.

“When it comes to the environment, one cannot work alone, we all have to work together to generate synergy.”

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Even the trees get the once over