

"Voting Ashtray" tested at local beaches

Clever ballot bin begs for your butts

STORY AND PHOTO
BY JIM MATUSIK

It turns out that the lowly and ubiquitous cigarette butt holds the award for being the most commonly discarded piece of waste worldwide with a staggering 1.69 billion pounds winding up as toxic trash each year.

Enter "Neat Streets," a London based campaign created by an environmental charity called Hubbub. Using the latest thinking, design, and behavioral change research from around the world, they have creatively tackled the omnipresence of litter and have tested a range of interventions that focused on all different types of litter from chewing gum to those notorious butts.

Their first idea to be produced was the Ballot Bin and its goal was to jolt people out of their normal littering routine by asking fun questions that everyone would have an opinion on. After its launch in Westminster last year, the Bin took social media by storm, and was immediately introduced around the world.

Each box has a question written on a message board with a choice of two answers each with its own container. The voting system encourages smokers to vote simply by dropping their snuffed out butts into one of the two bins.

The message board has magnetic letters and questions are changed on a regular basis to keep the interest fresh. They are customizable and topical to reflect the interests of the target audience.

A recent question on the box at Oak St. beach posed the question, "Deep Dish Pizza or Chicago Dog?" The debris piles viewed through transparent glass seemed fairly equal but more importantly, showed signs of use.

The Bin is a pilot program co-sponsored by The Alliance For The Great Lakes and The Chicago Park District.



A recent question on the box at Oak St. beach posed the question, "Would you rather be a dragon or have a dragon?"

"The Alliance has 25 years of data on collected beach garbage, says spokesperson, Jennifer Caddick, and the main offender has always been cigarette butts. Our staff is always on the lookout for creative solutions to fight litter and came across the Neat Streets Campaign."

Each butt from the bin will be systematically counted and matched against last years numbers to see if there is a noticeable reduction in these toxic little trashlets as compared to last year.

And so, each butt from the bin will be systematically counted and matched against last years numbers to see if there is a noticeable reduction in these toxic little trashlets as compared to last year.

Cigarette butts are composed of cellulose acetate that can be broken down into smaller pieces but will never biodegrade or disappear.

The CDC recently reported that smoking among Americans has reached an all time low with just

as smokers.

The latest Morbidity and Mortality Report relates that smoking rates remain high among low income Americans, many of whom are uninsured and rely solely on Medicaid.

Just 50 years ago 42.4% of the population were persistent puffers due to lack of details on the damage cigarettes can cause to public health and the clever and persistent reinforcement from the advertising genius of the Mad Men.

But, today, due to greater awareness and information, and systematic government actions like public health campaigns, smoking bans in public places and skyrocketing tobacco taxes, this perpetual habit is slowly being snuffed out.

The battle of the butt goes on and there will always be someone lighting up somewhere, but with more public awareness and clever options like the Ballot Bin, this titan of trash may someday find itself on the extinction list.

Meanwhile, smokers, think inside the box and vote with your butt!

All profits from the sales of the Bins goes back to charity, so, if you are interested in getting one for your schoolyard or pool hall,

Traffic alert: Lollapalooza street closures

The Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC) reminds motorists and residents to be aware of the street closures and traffic impacts due to the sold-out four day Lollapalooza music festival in Grant Park starting Thursday and running through Sunday.

Residents can expect large crowds, street closures, and noise impacts from the festival.

Preparatory closures began on July 16 and will remain in place until Aug. 4. A complete list of closures and their dates and times are listed below:

Now until August 4 at 4pm:

• Balbo, from Columbus to Lake Shore Dr.

Now until Aug. 3 at 4 p.m.:

• Jackson, from Columbus

to Lake Shore

Now until Aug. 6 at 4 p.m.:

• West sidewalk of Lake Shore Dr., from Monroe to Roosevelt

Now until Aug. 1 at 4 p.m.:

• Columbus, from Monroe to Roosevelt

• Congress, from Michigan to Columbus

• Balbo, from Michigan to Columbus

Now until until July 31, 11:59 p.m.:

• One lane of Southbound Lake Shore Dr. from Monroe to Roosevelt

To ensure Lakefront Access, pedestrians must use the East sidewalk of Michigan to access the North sidewalk of Monroe.

For more information call 312-742-7529.

SEE is next sense to transform downtown alley

Visual experience of light, color and shadow Aug. 5

Chicago Loop Alliance (CLA) is launching its fourth ACTIVATE event of the year, SEE, on Thursday, Aug. 5 from 5-10 p.m. in the Couch Place Alley, 170 N State St, between E. Lake St. and W. Randolph St.

This year's ACTIVATE series explores a unique overarching theme of the five senses—touch, hear, smell, see and taste—through art, music and lights.

Attendees will rethink how they SEE the world around them as the Loop's ordinary spaces transform into extraordinary works of art. Local artists manipulate the alleyway walls, turning them into canvases for light, color and shadow.

Highlights from the Gene Siskel Film Center's Black Harvest Film Festival will delight and intrigue as clips are projected down the length of the alley.

Over the past two seasons, ACTIVATE claims to have generated nearly \$900,000 in economic impact to Loop businesses, with more than 30,000 people in attendance over the course of the series. Each event is paired with special promotions from Loop businesses through "Linger Longer," a program introduced to attendees last summer.

Guests who RSVP in advance at loopchicago.com/activate receive a complimentary drink ticket for beer or wine at the event. For more information call 312-782-9160.

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VIKING from p. 1

uled as the last stop for the Draken