

Constantly Cleaning-up

By Chad Petri Reporter

Published: February 06 2008 - 5:46 am Last Updated: February 06 2008 - 6:15 am



A loud, high powered cleaning machine is what's known as a gum-buster. David Earl Carlswell says he's proud to keep downtown Mobile spotless.

“The compliments I get from the people and it makes me feel appreciated,” says downtown Ambassador Carlswell. He's one the six people that helps clean-up 77 city blocks everyday. The gum buster is a small machine designed to scrub out junk stuck to the sidewalk. The Downtown Mobile Alliance has a variety of unusual tools in its arsenal. This mad vac is a lawnmower sized sweeper.

“Our sweeping devices are basically big fancy vacuums,” says Bid Operations Manager Clayton Ratledge. “[They] suck up the trash from the sidewalks.” The busiest times of the year revolve around big events like Bayfest and Mardi Gras. Most weekends can leave a lot of junk in their wake.

“We have a pretty large entertainment district downtown so we have a lot of trash on Saturday and Sunday mornings, says Ratledge. “Also, each [weekday] morning we have a good bit of trash, we try to get the majority of it up by noon.” Garbage is where you find it. Ratledge says you're more likely to see trash in a park, but outside a bar or restaurant you're more likely to see cigarette butts.

“Sometimes people don't realize that cigarette butts are trash,” says Ratledge. “It takes a lot of our people's time picking up all the butts in downtown mobile and it is trash.” Sidewalks are power-washed regularly and workers knock out at least one block per day. The Broyhill is a large golf cart like machine with a huge vacuum hose attached. Even with all the hardware, sometimes it's an uphill battle.

“Litter is a constant problem,” Ratledge says. “It never stops so we try to keep everything clean, which can be tough sometimes.

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