

Dozens of volunteers, including local Unificationists, clean up Philadelphia

Shota Iwasaki
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Dozens of volunteers, including local Unificationists, came together to clean up the streets of Philadelphia on September 12. Neighbors and local leaders spent the day picking up litter throughout the Germantown area of the city in hopes of creating a safer and cleaner community.

“Our street cleaning efforts have helped raise awareness to build a better and more beautiful city,” said Philadelphia Family Church Pastor Shota Iwasaki, who was among 40 volunteers. “We cleaned several streets and removed trash from the underpass of Lena and Aramat streets.”

The cleanup was organized by a few local non-profit organizations. The group spent three hours filling more than 36 large garbage bags of litter piled on the sidewalks.



“I was shocked to see massive amounts of junk that spilled onto the street in some areas,” said Kecina Vasquez, one of the volunteers. “There was construction debris, appliances, and even mattresses dumped on the sidewalk.”

Illegal dumping has been a growing problem in Philadelphia, prompting city officials to initiate a reporting hotline for trash that is illegally discarded on the streets. But some neighborhoods, like

Germantown, have gotten so bad that locals are now tackling the unsanitary issue themselves, hitting the streets with garbage bags, trash pickers, and gloves.

“The dirty streets affect everyone who lives here,” said Pastor Shota. “We had some high school volunteers who also joined us; and I was so amazed to see an elderly lady, who was perhaps 90, join our efforts as well.”



For larger items, the group solicited the city for sanitation trucks to pick up mattresses, dressers, and other furniture.

“After the cleanup, we all felt a deep sense of accomplishment and joy,” said Pastor Shota. “The neighborhood looks beautiful now.”

The volunteers said they will petition the city to install lighting and cameras at certain problem sites to deter further dumping and ensure more safety. They also want to add murals to the neighborhood.

