

Beach teachers

■ Adults can learn from the youths who cleaned up the shore.

Usually, the adults teach the children. Pick up your toys, they say. At other times, though, the youngsters do the teaching.

A cleanup at Durand-Eastman Beach — on a day last month when Lake Ontario looked like the Atlantic Ocean — was one of those other times.

A group of about 35 4-H students picked up a grownup mess at the Durand beach, collecting 24 bags of trash weighing about 250 pounds. The volunteers cleared away beer bottles, underwear, an old box that once held fireworks and other stuff that was trashing the beach along Lake Ontario.

The effort by the local middle school and elementary school students was part of the Great Lakes Cleanup, which attracts more than 200,000 people worldwide.

The local beach cleanup, organized by 4-H, has been held for four years. Another 4-H group was to conduct a similar sweep of trash at Hamlin Beach last month.

The volunteer beach cleaners had

some telling comments as they labored in a chilling rain.

"If we don't clean up the beach, no one else is going to," said 12-year-old Jamie Romeo. "People come to the beach to watch sunsets and stuff like that. Twenty-five years from now, they don't want to sit in a landfill."

Meaghan Bennett, age 8, said that by helping the community, the young people are ultimately helping themselves.

She's absolutely right. The young people are helping to preserve and improve the area's environment for future generations.

Perhaps the young people's work is already paying dividends. Last year there were 50 bags of beach trash collected — everything from barbecue grills to golf balls.

"You wonder why do grownups throw so much stuff here?" asked Jamie as she collected last week. "It's like children who need to be told to pick up their toys."

When these young people grow up, things just might be different.

Clean beaches could be commonplace by then. □