

som|dog Ward Coordinators

History

The idea of the som|dog Ward Coordinator was born in Spring 2005 as a way for the Somerville Dog Owners Group to promote itself as a community service organization.

On Spring Clean Up Day, the City designates a public space (usually a park or schoolyard) in each ward as a clean-up site. The City also designates “Ward Captains” (Aldermen and School Committee members) to organize the volunteer efforts of residents.

Somerville dog owners from wards one, two, three and six volunteered to serve as Ward Coordinators 1) to *recruit* dog owners in their ward to participate in the citywide spring clean up, 2) to *lobby* the City's “Ward Captains” regarding the needs of residents who own dogs, and 3) to *promote* the Somerville Dog Owners Group.

Recruitment

Prior to Somerville Spring Clean Up Day, som|dog Ward Coordinators worked to recruit dog owners in their ward to participate in their ward clean up.

- Ward Coordinators distributed fliers to dog owners and talked to them about the ward clean up
- Ward Coordinators contacted residents in their ward who had signed the som|dog petition and invited them to join the ward clean up

Lobbying

On Somerville Spring Clean Up Day, som|dog Ward Coordinators spoke with the “Ward Captains”—the Alderman and School Committee Member from their ward—about the need for safe and legal options for off-leash recreation in their neighborhood.

- Ward Coordinators introduced themselves as members of the Somerville Dog Owners Group to the Aldermen and members of the School Committee.
- Ward Coordinators introduced other dog owners to the Ward Captains.

Promotion (outreach)

Even though we did not have our dogs with us at the clean-up sites (dogs are not allowed in schoolyards and most parks in the City!), the people of Somerville could see that dog owners are good neighbors who care about our neighborhoods and about open space in our neighborhoods.

- Ward Coordinators wore som|dog t-shirts on Somerville Spring Clean Up Day.
- Ward Coordinators introduced themselves as dog owners to people from the neighborhood.

The Importance of som|dog Ward Coordinators

All of our successes are predicated on recruiting dog owners, lobbying elected officials and outreach to the community. Through our recruitment, lobbying and outreach:

- The city opened its first off-leash recreational area at Nunziato Field this spring
- The Somerville Arts Council granted som|dog a booth at ArtBeat this summer
- Mayor Curtatone lead the East Somerville Neighborhood Dog Walk this fall