Clifton is known as “The City That Cares.”

What’s also true is that its people care about their city.

On May 24, New Jersey Clean Communities, a statewide, comprehensive, litter-abatement program, made sure everyone knew that, presenting Clifton with an award in recognition of its “Adopt-A-Spot/Ramp” program, ongoing for the past 25 years.

Coordinator Al DuBois – who has been with the program since its inception – accepted on behalf of Mayor James Anzaldi at the Clean Communities 15th annual spring conference in Lambertville, N.J.

While he could not be at the event, Anzaldi takes great pride in the program he originated from his daily morning drives through city neighborhoods.

Anzaldi would often see litter or debris along ramps for Routes 3, 46, 19 and 20. In
response, he formed a committee to identify Clifton’s most neglected areas, and the Adopt-A-Spot/Ramp program was born. The program encouraged businesses, many of them landscapers, to adopt highway ramps in and out of Clifton.

“These areas were not being maintained on a regular basis by the state or county governments,” said DuBois. “Our program now has more than 50 areas adopted – cleaned regularly of litter.”

To recognize the civic-minded businesses, signs are placed on the adopted spots with the name of the business/landscaper, saying that the work is part of the Clean Communities program.

“Throughout the years,” said DuBois, a driving force in the initiative’s success, “nearly 200 landscapers or other businesses have adopted areas, taking pride in keeping Clifton clean. While the adopters might change, Clifton continues to have 50 areas that would not be regularly maintained if not for this program.”

The businesses adopting spots often go beyond cleaning areas and cutting grass.

“They are also maintained,” he said, “through trimming of bushes and branches, and several locations have been transformed through the planting of flowers and other shrubs, surrounded by fresh mulch. We morphed into a beautification program. The great thing is the business community and city residents have bought into this.”

As examples, he cites the Dutch Hill Residents Association members who have beautified and maintained the Athenia train station.

“They really took ownership of it,” DuBois said. “The Botany Village/East Clifton Resident Association has also done a lot of work.”

Dubois said the Knollcroft Association was a big help in the early nineties.
“They changed a small sliver of land on Route 3” he said, “into a tree farm which produced more than 150 trees. We also had a greenhouse there that produced flowers planted annually across our town.”

Dubois cited the late Councilwoman Gloria Kolodziej for her leadership in founding the since-closed tree farm (the city has since assumed maintenance on the property).

“That started with one group who wanted to clean up Route 3,” he added.

The May 24 award is not the first time Clifton was lauded for its efforts. In prior years, the “Take Pride in America” program recognized Clifton with an award for “outstanding dedication and contribution to the maintaining of public lands.” The program also issued awards to three Clifton volunteers for their Adopt-A-Spot work.

“This partnership,” said DuBois, “exemplified the goals of the Clean Communities program and keeps Clifton clean. We touched a lot of lives.”

On Clifton’s centennial last year, Sandy Huber, executive director of New Jersey Clean Communities Council, recognized Clifton as a civic beautification leader.

“I have had the privilege,” Huber wrote, “to work with Mayor James Anzaldi and many citizens of Clifton over the years to bring the Clean Communities message to this terrific community and throughout northern New Jersey. More than 50 landscapes of county and state property in Clifton have been adopted, maintained and beautified by local businesses and volunteers.

“Clifton has been amazing!”
In 2004, Peter Ciamboli, Jim Scangarello and Adam Dull at Clifton Station, the adopted spot maintained by the Dutch Hill Residents Association. Dull and Scangarello are lifelong Clifton residents. Ciamboli lives in Roseland, but has been working with the Association on their adopted spot for the past two years. Top of page: the Clifton Tree Nursery in 1997.