

Water and Energy Awareness Day gets learning flowing at Red Rock Park

Written by By Boderra Joe Sun Correspondent
Friday, 09 March 2018 09:28



The interactive learning event is in its thirteenth year

Since Gallup is the central location for schools in the McKinley County, practicing good water conservation and energy saving is a matter of routine.

The City of Gallup and Gallup McKinley County Schools teamed up March 7, giving students a hands-on lesson on how to conserve water and energy at the Water and Energy Awareness Day event at Red Rock Park.

STUDENTS

For the past 13 years, Water and Energy Awareness Day has had success in educating over 13,000 fourth and fifth grade students, along with teachers and high school volunteers.

Participating elementary schools included: Jefferson Elementary, Twin Lakes Elementary, Red Rock Elementary, David Skeets Elementary, Ramah Elementary, Navajo Elementary, Thoreau Elementary, and Crownpoint Elementary.

Each group had roughly 15 to 25 students and were chaperoned by teachers and high school volunteers.

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MAIN EVENT

The city's environmental program coordinator, Elizabeth Barriga, is the director of the event, which teaches the importance of conserving water and water-reducing routines in a fun atmosphere.

Barriga said that the outdoor event provides important context for students who learn visually, and have trouble in classroom environments. The hands-on approach is helpful when teaching science, water and electrical safety education.

"Interactive atmosphere is what most kids will love," Barriga said. "[They] learn things in a different fashion."

Barriga keeps busy outside of organizing the yearly event. She writes grants, updates water reports every year, and tackles projects and administration of some of the grants. Still, Barriga takes pride when she sees the impact Water and Energy Awareness Day has on students.

"This [event] takes a huge chunk of time for a couple of months throughout the year," she said. "Coordinating the teachers, presenters, volunteers, training, and anybody who has any questions. It's a lot of work to do this. But the biggest thing about this, is seeing the wonderment on the kids' faces and their fascination of what they're learning."

FOCUS

Beyond being fun and informative for Gallup students, the event's main goal was to raise awareness of water conservation through public presentations.

This year's 24-plus presenters all led water-based activities and discussed topics including erosion, conservation, ground water, and the water cycle. The presenters demonstrated how students and the community could improve their water usage, suggesting changing out water

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wasting fixtures to lower flow models, turning off the water when brushing your teeth, and practicing sustainable landscaping.

The City of Gallup presenter demonstrated to students how to see and understand leaks inside the city's water pipes, which use portable cameras to locate where a leak is coming from.

Fred Johnson, an environmental specialist from the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency, discussed the waters of the Navajo Nation and their water quality standards, which include domestic water supplies, recreation, fish and wildlife, livestock watering, agriculture, and irrigation.

Johnson discussed a variety of expansions pertaining to pollution that generates on the Navajo Nation. This includes pollution from unmanaged grazing, off road travel, construction activity, irrigated agriculture, and illegal trash dumping.

"Once you make the tracks other people will follow," Johnson said. "Pretty soon wind and water will erode the soil, create big gullies, and disrupt the land's water flow."

He also said that if water is diverted due to unnecessary dirt roads, it will give less water to plants and will cause grazing issues that will then lead to other problems, like unmanaged grazing, pollution and lowering the water table.

VOLUNTEERS

Coordinators, volunteers, and escorts offered assistance to the presenters and the young students throughout the event.

About 70-plus high school students from Gallup High School and Miyamura High School volunteered assist Buffie Klumpenhower, a teacher at Miyamura High School.

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PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Professional resource organization presenters instructed a wide-range of educational classes, which focused on pollution, water conservation, and understanding the importance of water.

Each professional resource organization was funded by their own staff to present at the event.

These organizations included:

The City of Gallup

The National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration

Sandia National Laboratories

The Bureau of Reclamation from Farmington & Phoenix, Ariz.

COPE-Community Outreach Patient Empowerment

Carollo Engineers

Cibola National Forest — Mount Taylor District

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The City of Gallup Water

The New Mexico Environment Department Surface Water Quality Bureau

T-SHIRT DESIGN CONTEST

The event also included a design contest.

An online application was sent to all GMCS art teachers and their classes to participate.

Prizes were awarded to the winning designs.

THANKS & ADMIRATION

The event and its organizers thanked the sponsorship of the following organizations: New Mexico Water Conservation Alliance, which gathered sponsorship support from the McCune Foundation, Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems, City of Gallup, Papa John's, Subway, Sonic, S&B DES., and Lowe's Shop N' Save.

The event organizers also appreciated the efforts of the artists who created and submitted their T-shirt designs, along with the local high school student volunteers from Gallup, Miyamura, and Rehoboth Christian School.

For more information, contact the City of Gallup, 110 West Aztec Avenue. Call: (505) 863-1220.

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Or visit: <https://www.gallupnm.gov/421/Water-and-Energy-Awareness-Day>

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