

# Students Fish for Knowledge at 14th Annual Lewis and Clark Water Festival

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**GODFREY** – Approximately 500 fifth grade students in 21 classes from nine different schools gathered at Lewis and Clark Community College for the 14th annual Water Festival, Friday, Sept. 30.

“This year's Water Festival was a huge success,” said Environmental Educator and Water Festival Coordinator Allison Rhanor. “The weather was perfect, and we were fortunate enough to have a little more than 100 volunteers to help with the event, most being Lewis and Clark students who wanted to get involved.”

Students learned about environmental sciences and participated in outdoor activities during the daylong event, which was organized by the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?).

“The Water Festival is awesome and it is very fun,” said De’ Angelo Robinson, a fifth grade student from Mason/Clark Middle School in East St. Louis, Illinois. “I learned about nature and what happens in water. It is all about the circle of life. I love it.”

For the third time, each participating class was asked to collect shoes to donate to the Shoeman Water Project (SWP), which focuses on providing clean water to communities in developing countries.

A total of 1,336 pairs of shoes were collected during the shoe drive—321 more pairs of shoes than were collected last year. SWP Community Engagement Specialist Nick Lintner said the shoes will be sold in a secondary market, and the money raised is used to build wells in developing countries.

“We cannot do this without you,” Lintner said to the fifth graders as they ate lunch. “This isn’t about what we at the Shoeman Water Project do ourselves. It is about you and the people you are helping. Your donations will help us construct a well in Uganda.”

Sarah Brokering’s fifth grade class from C.A. Henning Elementary School in Troy,



Illinois, collected the most

shoes, 322 pairs in all. That averages out to approximately 12 pairs of shoes per student in the class. Each student in the winning class received a Water Festival T-shirt for their efforts.

“This year, we were able to engage fifth graders from across four different counties with fun, hands-on activities that exposed them to a variety of freshwater topics,” Rhanor said. “For some of these students, this is the time they've been exposed to water as a natural resource, despite living right on the Mississippi River. It's amazing to be able to reach so many of our youth with this sort of experience.”

Other activities at the Water Festival included canoeing, fishing, Japanese fish painting, bug collecting and geocaching. Students also learned about water collection in developing countries, water treatment methods, pollution causes and effects, storm water management, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, native fish species, bird migration, watershed management and water conservation.

“I think it is a great experience for the kids,” said Sylvia Haygood, fifth grade teacher at Mason/Clark Middle School. “My students otherwise wouldn’t be able to take a canoe ride or be out in nature learning. They have experienced a lot of things that they otherwise would not encounter.”

Fifth grade teachers who brought students to the Water Festival were required to attend a teacher workshop before the event. The workshop provided the teachers with curricular materials, supplies and teaching methodologies to enhance water education in their classrooms.

“I thought the teacher’s workshop was a lot of fun,” said Megan McCormack, a teacher in training at Metro East Montessori in Pontoon Beach, Illinois. “I personally learned things too, which I thought was great. We got this amazing book with all these lessons it that are very user friendly. It makes me excited to teach about this subject, and I can’t wait to share this knowledge with my students.”

Water Festival sponsors include an anonymous local private foundation, Illinois American Water, the Swarovski Waterschool, Southern Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Committee, Madison County, Wood River Refinery, the Horinko Group, Pepsi, Walmart, Casey’s General Store, Dynegy, J.L. Nash, Grassroots Grocery and the St. Louis Bread Company.

To learn more about Water Festival, visit [www.ngrrrec.org/Education/Children/Water-Festival](http://www.ngrrrec.org/Education/Children/Water-Festival).