



Water Festival Makes a Splash at L&C

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GODFREY - Hundreds of fifth graders from 10 local schools gathered at Lewis and Clark Community College for the 10th Annual Water Festival today.

"We want kids to connect to the importance of water issues, such as conservation, pollution and the presence of invasive species," said Natalie Marioni, Environmental Educator for L&C and the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center.

"Through these fun, interactive experiences, like canoeing, we are teaching children that water can be fun, provide substance and is important for all life. The Water Festival is a great way to start the process of making better water stewards for our communities."

Sixteen exhibits were set up to give students hands-on learning experiences ranging from fishing to geocaching. Andrew Raymond, a 10-year old student at Lewis and Clark Elementary in Wood River, especially enjoyed the activities at the festival.

"It's fun," Raymond said. "You get to go canoeing and fishing. We also learned how to use a GPS during our scavenger hunt."

Janet Mifflin, Natural Resources Specialist for the Army Corps of Engineers, and her colleagues taught students how to use a GPS unit to locate hidden caches around the festival area while slipping in interesting, fun water-related facts.

"We hope kids bond with the outdoors through geocaching and want to do more," Mifflin said. "We also hope they come and visit us at the National Great Rivers Museum, which is located next to the Jerry F. Costello NGRREC Confluence Field Station in Alton."

Melissa Ahrens, a 10-year-old student from Trinity Lutheran in Edwardsville, also enjoyed geocaching and other Water Festival activities. "I think it's really fun to do the scavenger hunt and to learn about history, recycling, cleaning up pollution, and being safe around water," Ahrens said. "The Water Festival is a really fun way of learning."

Meadowbrook Intermediate students from Jenna Ford's fifth grade class (L to R) Noah Zimmerman; Mary Jae Kirby and Dannielle Dankenbring look at specimens of macro invertebrates during Lewis and Clark Community College's 10th Annual Water Festival. Photo by S. Paige Allen

Teachers from participating classes took part in an educational workshop on Monday in preparation for the event. They were given instructional materials, which included a laminated map of the Mississippi and guides for identifying leaves, fish and trees.

"It is important to give our kids an opportunity to learn about the environment, nature and watershed management," said Shianne Shively, whose fifth grade class from Highland Elementary attended the Water Festival for the first time this year. "NGRREC did a great job of putting on the Water Festival. The stations were informative, and the kids had a great time."

The event was made possible through sponsorship and donations from Illinois American Water, British Petroleum, Pizzo Native Plant Nursery, Native Landscape Contractors, Global Brass and Copper Inc., The Horinko Group, Phillips66 Wood River Refinery, Pepsi, Walmart, Veolia Water, US Army Corps of Engineers, Southern Regional Groundwater Protection Planning Committee, and Panera Bread.

Many local volunteers also helped to make this year's Water Festival a success including students from Alton High School and Lewis and Clark Community College. Blake Raynor, a Lewis and Clark student from Gillespie, said was happy to work with the children as they learned how to fish.

"I like to help out," Raynor said. "I also like to be around kids. I'm outgoing and a big kid at heart."

Mark Yehling, fishing coordinator for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, instructed students on how to safely cast a fishing pole, while volunteers actually helped the kids fish in a pond.

"We've caught hundreds of fish today," Yehling said. "We let students take a look at the fish and then release them back into the pond." Yehling also said teaching children how to fish helps them appreciate and respect nature while encouraging them to visit local parks.

For more information about L&C activities, visit www.lc.edu. For more information about the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center visit <http://ngrrec.org/>