

L&C Marks 20th Anniversary Of Water Festival

by Jen Young

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EAST ALTON – Nine regional fifth-grade classes explored interactive booths focusing on the importance of water during the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRRECsm) 20th Annual Water Festival, held Friday, Sept. 30, at the Lewis and Clark Community College’s Godfrey campus.

Since 2002, more than 13,000 students and 150 teachers from 42 schools in about a dozen counties and two states have participated in the Water Festival.

“Water is something that we rely on every day and the work that we do here at NGRREC is dedicated to not just studying and protecting our freshwater resources, but

also educating people about the importance of those valuable resources,” Director of Environmental Education Sarah Fisher said. “Water Festival is a way for us to bring together regional schools and community partners in a day dedicated to celebrating and learning about water.”

Water Festival, which began as the Water Stewardship Project, was created after discovering a lack of water stewardship education, specifically in elementary schools and as a way to connect students to water, their local environment, and organizations that help conserve the environment.

This year, 29 stations were set up and classes rotated from station to station during the five-hour long event. From nature hikes to canoe rides, students enjoyed soaking up the knowledge and entertainment.

Since the beginning, the two major components of the event included a professional development day for participating fifth-grade teachers and a water activities festival for their students.

The teacher workshop, which took place on Monday, Sept. 26, provided the teachers with curricular materials, supplies and the teaching methodology to introduce water education to their students. This year’s workshop focused on the Swarovski Waterschool program and Project WET (Water Education Today).

“Swarovski Waterschool is being taught as part of this year’s workshop because it provides greater than STEM education, it provides students with a global prospective and introduces teachers to action projects for schoolyards,” Swarovski Waterschool Educator Jen Mandeville said. “We aim to empower teachers to bring activities back to their classrooms and introduce teachers to two great programs.”

Supporting organizations include Illinois American Water, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service, among many others.

The Water Festival is entirely funded by generous sponsorships and the event is free for all school participants including transportation costs.

Visit <http://www.ngrrec.org/Education/Children/Water-Festival/> to learn more about water festival or contact Sarah Fisher at saafisher@lc.edu or (618) 468-2783.

Learn more about the Swarovski Waterschool visit http://www.ngrrec.org/Swarovski_Waterschool/ or contact Jen Mandeville at jmandeville@lc.edu or (618) 468-2790.

National Great Rivers Research and Education Center (NGRREC?)

Founded in 2002 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Lewis and Clark Community College, NGRREC is dedicated to the study of great river systems and the communities that use them. The center aspires to be a leader in scholarly research, education, and outreach related to the interconnectedness of large rivers, their floodplains, watersheds, and their associated communities. To learn more about NGRREC, visit www.ngrrec.org.