



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Investing in Environmental Education: A Drought-Proof Solution

Nation's Largest Water Education Festival Hosted Nearly 7,000 OC Elementary Students

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. – (April 10, 2014) The Orange County Water District's (OCWD) Groundwater Guardian Team, which includes Orange County Water District, Disneyland Resort and the National Water Research Institute, hosted the 18th annual Children's Water Education Festival March 26-27, 2014 at the University of California, Irvine (UCI). Nearly 7,000 third, fourth and fifth grade Orange County students attended the free field trip to learn about water and the environment; all curriculum corresponded to California Science Standards.

The drought was a primary topic, as well as the need to practice lifelong water-use efficiency. In California, we are expected to experience droughts three out of every ten years. Knowing this probability OCWD and its partners invested in teaching youth how to prepare for and respond to these conditions.

Since its inception, the Festival has empowered more than 100,000 students to protect the environment, while also exposing them to career opportunities in environmental and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. In its second year serving as the venue, UCI was the perfect setting for this event. Many students stepped onto a college campus for the first time and learned from some of the most accomplished scientists, engineers and environmental experts from organizations such as, National Geographic, UCI and the Wyland Foundation.

“This event was a transforming experience for future innovators and conservationists,” said OCWD President Shawn Dewane. “It brought generations together to prepare our youth to meet the challenges that lie ahead, especially as they relate to water reliability.”

The Festival is a structured event and is not open to the general public. Orange County students are registered in advance. During the event, students remain with their teacher and parent chaperones as they rotate every 30 minutes to a different activity. 65 public and private organizations took part in the Festival by hosting a hands-on activity. Most activities took place in Aldrich Park, which is located in the center of campus surrounded by grass, trees and the various colleges, while a few activities were hosted inside lecture halls.

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**2014 CHILDREN’S WATER EDUCATION FESTIVAL
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“It is very important to inspire youth to care for our planet and its many resources,” said Frank Dela Vara, director of environmental affairs for the Disneyland Resort, a Festival sponsor for 18 years. “This event embodies many of our core values and our participation underscores our commitment to environmental conservation and active stewardship.”

Thanks to the generosity of this year’s sponsors, especially the event title sponsor Used Oil Recycling, the success of this important educational event endured. In addition to monetary and in-kind donations, conducting a Festival of this size requires more than 600 volunteers, staff and presenters. We thank the many organizations and individuals who came together and took the time to invest in the environmental education of our youth.

Educational topics covered at the Festival included the drought, the water cycle, groundwater and surface water protection, wetlands preservation, recycling, pollution prevention and water treatment, distribution and conservation, and local environmental issues. To learn more about the event or to view a brief video, please visit www.childrenwaterfestival.com.