



NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Gina Ayala, (714) 378-3323 or gayala@ocwd.com

Orange County Water Education Festival Recognized for Bringing Community Together to Inspire the Next Generation

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (May 31, 2017) - Recently receiving the 2017 Communitas Award, the Children's Water Education Festival (the Festival) has been engaging today's youth through hands-on educational activities since 1997. Hosted by the Orange County Water District (OCWD), Disneyland Resort and the National Water Research Institute, the event has touched the lives of more than 122,000 Orange County students and has inspired this next generation of leaders to work on and solve environmental challenges.

Communitas is a Latin word that means people coming together for the good of the community and this underscores why the Festival was honored with this award. The Award recognizes exceptional businesses, organizations and individuals that are unselfishly giving of themselves and their resources, and those that are changing how they do business to benefit their communities. Nominations were evaluated based on the extent and effectiveness of their program as well as its scope and size.

"The real reward here is that we are investing in our youth to be the water and environmental leaders of tomorrow," said OCWD President Denis Bilodeau, P.E. "OCWD has been committed to this investment for more than 20 years and I am grateful to the many volunteers and organizations throughout the community that strengthen our effort. Their time, talent and financial contributions are truly appreciated," he added.

Annually, the Festival serves approximately 7,500 third, fourth and fifth grade Orange County students. It is a free field trip that has the ancillary benefits of exposing students to careers in water and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); creating an environmentally literate generation; and enthusing attendees to be environmental stewards while teaching them the value of water. Held at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), the Festival immerses students into a college environment and encourages them to also pursue higher education.

"We applaud the efforts of the Orange County Water District and congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition," said Frank Dela Vara, director of environmental affairs at Disneyland Resort. "Disneyland Resort is committed to inspiring children to create a brighter tomorrow, and environmental education is a key component of that."

The magnitude of this event is demonstrated by the sheer number of people and organizations involved. Over the two-day event, nearly 9,000 people come together for a singular mission—to educate and inspire. There are more than 70 structured activities taught by industry professionals from highly regarded institutions such as, California Department of Water Resources, NASA/JPL, National Geographic, Stanford University, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, Wyland Foundation, and many more.

OCWD is dedicated to the creation, promotion and management of water education and conservation programs throughout Orange County and the Festival is a prime example. For more about the event, please visit www.childrenwaterfestival.com. To learn about OCWD and how it provides regional water reliability, visit www.ocwd.com. Finally, information about the Communitas Award, which was started in 2010, may be found at www.communitasawards.com.

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About Orange County Water District (OCWD)

The Orange County Water District is committed to enhancing Orange County's groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities rely on the groundwater basin, managed by OCWD, to provide 75 percent of their water demands: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster and Yorba Linda.

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