



Water festival entertains, educates young students

Narration: Here's a pop quiz: How do you educate nearly 1,000 fifth- and sixth-grade students on the importance of water while they have a day of fun? For the eastern Idaho community, the answer is the Water Festival. At the annual event, representatives from 13 community partners — including Idaho National Laboratory, Idaho's Department of Environmental Quality, the city of Idaho Falls, environmental firms and others — taught the next generation about the importance of preserving this precious resource.

The May 13 Water Festival invited young students to Tautphaus Park and Gem State Power Plant to spend a day learning more about the everyday resource. Rather than long lectures, these students have a hands-on experience, spending a day touring a hydropower plant, running through obstacle courses, making rain sticks, playing Jeopardy, even indulging in some interesting taste tests.

Narrator: So what did you guys learn about water today?

Students: We learned that we need it to live. And we learned, like, how much water we can use in, like, a year. About the irrigation system. And how some bugs clear other bugs from the water.

Narrator: So did you guys have fun, too?

Students: Yeah, we did have fun.

Narrator: What was the best thing you guys did?

Students: Well, especially the boat. The bug game. The race. Yeah, the bug game. It was awesome. We acted like we were all bugs. And that guy was down there and he acted like he was a pesticide and he was trying to kill us all.

Narrator: Oh, that sounds like a lot of fun.

Narration: Obviously, the fun factor is a big hit with the kids. The day is full of activities with important lessons like how water is used to create energy, Idaho water facts and why to never assume that water is safe for drinking.

After watching their peers taste samples of water blindfolded (*Kids laughing and shouting during workshop continues during narration*), David Richards, of the Idaho Falls Water Department, teaches the kids about water contamination.

DR: Guess what? Just because it *looks* clean, doesn't mean it always *is* clean. So while you're sitting down there, taking scoops of that water and drinking it, there could be a cow about 50 yards upstream doing his business in the water, OK? And we don't want any of that. Sounds gross, right? It is. There are diseases that you can get. These diseases could put you in the hospital. They are very serious, OK? So remember, when you guys go out camping or hiking: Bring your own water that you know is safe to drink.

Narration: It's difficult to believe that an event could entertain almost 1,000 kids and actually help them retain some important information. But the young participants showed that this festival did both.

Narrator: So what did you learn about water today?

Student: Well, I learned what the water plants actually did, like use water to make energy for lights and air conditioning. I learned how 70 percent of the water is used in a garden compared to the water we use in our house. And I had a lot of fun.

Narration: To help students understand the importance of water in everyday life and the future, the festival provided a unique day of fun, a day of learning and a group of students better prepared to protect a precious resource.

This is Rebecca Jones with Idaho National Laboratory Communications. If you'd like more information about the Water Festival and other community outreach events INL sponsors or participates in, visit www.inl.gov.

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