

City's Water Festival educates students on the environment

In April, local students left the classroom and learned about the environment first-hand at the City of Reidsville's second annual Water Festival.

Over 120 fourth-grade students from Moss Street and South End Elementary Schools came to Lake Reidsville to learn about natural resources and the role the children play in helping to protect those resources. Among the topics covered were water quality and conservation, stormwater, fats, oils and grease, recycling and water safety. The event, held during Earth Day week, is the brainchild of festival coordinator Cathey Justice, Utilities Compliance Technician, with the City of Reidsville.



Justice does several educational presentations throughout the year for kids in Reidsville, including at the YMCA and local daycares.

"I am so passionate about reaching out to all the kids in the City and heightening their awareness," she said. "I thought coordinating a water festival each year would be another great opportunity for more children to gain knowledge about why these topics are so important."

The expertise and knowledge shared by the volunteers is amazing, she said.

KRG Utilities, which has performed slip lining of water lines for the City in the Ann Ruston neighborhood, showed the students how they use cameras to view water and sewer lines. The effects of fats, oils and grease were also discussed as part of the presentation.

Reidsville firefighters talked to the students about water safety. Scott Jewell, the City's

Water Treatment Plant Superintendent, explained about water quality and brought different types of bugs that exist in water.

The children were given magnifying glasses to look at the different types of insects.

The City's Sanitation Superintendent Pat Knowles showed what types of items can be recycled. The students guessed which items would go into the recycling bin and which ones would go to the trash can and eventually the landfill. The kids also guessed which items should or should not be in our streams as part of a Stormwater Smart program.

New this year was an aeroponic/hydroponic tower garden provided by Juice Plus. Justice and company representatives



showed the students how the tower garden uses recycled water to grow up to 20 vegetable or fruit plants. No dirt is involved, but the plants need eight hours of sunlight or grow lights each day to mature. Such tower gardens can be used indoors or outdoors.



“It is the new healthier way of gardening,” Justice explained. “There are no pesticides, no dirt, no weeds and the vegetables, herbs or fruit can be grown all year round. It is great for people who do not have space for the traditional gardens.”

Justice wants to add new vendors each year to help in the educational efforts.

“Our goal is to teach the students how they can make a difference in protecting our water resources and the environment,” Justice stressed. “If one kid goes home and tells their mom that cooking grease can be recycled or what kind of drain or sewer problems such grease can cause when poured down the drain, I feel this one kid has educated his family and possibly his neighbors.”

“I think our volunteers would agree that our ‘reward’ is knowing our presentations are interesting and educational,” she said.