



NEWS RELEASE – City of Cottonwood, AZ

For Immediate Release

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Contacts: Mayor Diane Joens 634-4112 mayor@dianejoens.com
Cottonwood City Hall 634-5526 djoens@cottonwoodaz.gov

Mountain View Preparatory Academy Collaborates on Water Literacy for Kindergarteners Class

Mountain View Preparatory Academy kindergarteners wrapped up the school year with a brand new program entitled Water Literacy for Kindergarteners. Community volunteerism was at its highest level with the first successful completion of the new program, a partnership of the City of Cottonwood and Cottonwood-Oak Creek School District. Mayor Diane Joens and COCSD Superintendent Barbara U'Ren did not hesitate to understand and appreciate the significance of the program after the 'Water is Life' presentation by educator, community volunteer, and creator of the program, Linda Heidenreich, who also has a degree in geology from Northern Arizona University.

Superintendent U'Ren saw the program as a base for water education during the elementary school years and placed Heidenreich—known as Ms. H2O to the children—with kindergarten teacher Kevin Dix. Mayor Joens and City Manager Doug Bartosh saw an opportunity to have Cottonwood Municipal Utilities involved in the educational process of the youngest in the community. The program was presented to the Cottonwood City Council who also supported it. Development Services General Manager Dan Lueder worked with staff to implement the program.

The topic of water demanded rigorous attention, and the 38 students began the program with an in-class presentation by Ms. H2O, who also recognized Earth Day. Field trips began the following week with almost two miles of walking per field trip before students rode in the air-conditioned comfort of the Cottonwood Area Transit bus, and a final return to campus on Mr. Dix's little white school bus. Heidenreich felt it was important to add the use of public transit to the curriculum.

The first week, April 30-May 3, ten students each day walked the Verde River Jail Trail, accompanied by instructor Ms. H2O, volunteer aide Sarah O'Donnal and several parent aides. They engaged in plant and tree observation. Students collected samples, discussed animals and birds in a riparian zone, observed and discussed floodplain deposits, the groundwater-surface water interface, and water conservation, with the important question, "How does a river dry up?"

The second week, May 7-10, students accompanied by Ms. H2O, volunteer aides Sarah O'Donnal and Maggie Sloniger, and several parent aides, met Cottonwood Utilities Administrative Manager Roger Biggs at the Well Site #5 Water Storage Tank. He discussed water distribution from city wells to homes and businesses. The kindergarteners experienced all hands on the giant water tank. Biggs said, "In this day of billions, trillions and gazillions, I wanted to demonstrate that a million of something—gallons—was still a pretty big deal. So, putting their hands on the tank was sort of like holding a million gallons of water."

After more leg power and then a nice, cool CAT bus ride, students concluded with a tour of the Wastewater Treatment Plant by Cottonwood Wastewater Superintendent Debbie Breikreutz and Operator Gary Simgen. Kindergarteners learned how dirty water—water that is flushed—is processed into reclaimed water clean enough to be used in the community for plant life. Reclaimed water is a future renewable water supply for communities in the arid, drought-intensive Southwest.

“The program was a total success,” said Heidenreich. “I knew the program would work but Mr. Dix's kindergarten class surpassed all my expectations.”

Upon completion of the rigorous water literacy program, each student was issued a certificate signed by Mayor Joens and Ms. H20 entitled *Water Ambassadors for Water Conservation*. The students kept the water bottles with shoulder straps and the City of Cottonwood Utilities logo for future use in the field as they continue to explore water within their community, along with family and friends.

For now they are Water Ambassadors for Water Conservation, a big title and an even bigger accomplishment by the youngest members of our community. Mayor Joens said, “This is the first annual Water Literacy for Kindergarteners class, and we can't wait to do the program again next year. It was a joy working with Cottonwood-Oak Creek School District Superintendent U'Ren and her staff. Of course, without community volunteers like Ms. H20 Heidenreich, none of this would have happened. It was a great partnership all the way around.”

The Water Literacy for Kindergarteners program is an addition to the COCSD water education curriculum. Fourth grade students participate in Project WET and seventh graders learn conservation through school water audits.