

Ijams makes a splash with Waterfest

Kids everywhere are itching for summer vacation, especially on beautiful, sunny days. They're looking wistfully out of classroom windows, longing for sprinklers on the lawn, swimming pools, and cool, shady creeks.



Shannon Carey

Ijams Nature Center hosted an event Thursday that helped fulfill students' wishes. Waterfest is an annual event that brings about 800 area students and 100 parents and teachers to the center.

"It's just a chance for them to have fun and sneak in some education," said Ijams programs director Peg Beute.

Ijams staffers, CAC AmeriCorps volunteers, local water quality experts and representatives from local utility districts

led the kids in activities designed to help them learn about water quality issues.

Hallsdale-Powell Utility District representatives held bucket races for the kids and provided information about water filtration.

An AmeriCorps team helped kids launch water rockets. They wore hardhats and sent two-liter soda bottles shooting into the sky.

Another group of volunteers helped the kids make edible aquifers by layering shaved ice, ice cream and sprinkles to represent groundwater, rock and soil. They used food coloring on top to represent pollutants like oil. Then, they poured Sprite over the mixture to show where rain makes pollutants go — straight to the bottom.

Face painting and crafts were also available. Storytellers Nancy Brennan Strange and Sean McCullough regaled the kids with nature stories.

Ijams offers natural programs for adults and children throughout the year. The



Above, Shannondale Elementary students Katy Edlin and Peyton Williams run a waterbucket race at Waterfest while HPUD's Stefanie Farrell cheers them on. At right, Angie Williams and HPUD's Nick Jackson help Ashlyn Winns and Peyton Williams fill buckets for the bucket race. (Photos by S. Carey)



grounds, including scenic trails and exhibits, are free to the public. The grounds are open daily, 8 a.m. to dusk. The visitor center, exhibit hall and gift shop are open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Info: www.ijams.org.

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