



News Release

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LOCAL STUDENTS SOAK UP WATER LESSONS AT AUB

ATHENS, Tenn. – April showers bring more than May flowers. They also rejuvenate the sources we all depend upon for our drinking water.

With National Drinking Water week kicking off the month, May is the time to celebrate clean water.

For hundreds of local students, May is also a time to learn how water is treated and delivered to the community by Athens Utilities Board (AUB).

On ~~Thursday, May 15, and again~~ **CANCELLED** Tuesday, May 20, fourth and fifth graders from North City School will stream into AUB's water treatment plant off of Ingleside Avenue and into the Mouse Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant for a day of fun and education.

By month's end, more than 500 students from Athens, Etowah, Niota, and Riceville will have participated in tours at the AUB facilities.

Jill Davis, who heads AUB's water and wastewater divisions, believes the tours offer more than a fun field trip for students.

"It's about having fun while learning about the water system and how we all play a part in our environment," Davis said.

During the field trips, Davis and her AUB colleagues lead the kids through learning centers where activities include crafts that cleverly slip in lessons about clean water.

To move from one learning station to the next, students get a lesson in water and answer a few questions about what they've learned.

Workers help the students create water-cycle bracelets, check liquids for acidity using pH tests, build "the layers of the world" with ice cream and toppings, construct water lines, and participate in sampling the water and a nearby creek bed.

"Kids are naturally inquisitive and, of course, they like to have fun," Davis said. "These activities prove to be so much fun they may not realize that, in the process, they are learning about the critical nature of the water cycle," Davis said.

AUB's Wayne Scarbrough said that tying the tour activities to school and life beyond school is a bonus.

“Many of us remember wondering, ‘when will I use this math and science stuff?’ at some point in our early school experience,” Scarbrough said.

“Jill and her colleagues effectively show the kids that having clean water takes smart people who know their math and science, and that it can be fun,” he said.

Davis said that many people—young and old—seldom link the nuances of water and wastewater systems and how individual actions can affect the larger environmental picture.

“We all live downstream,” she said. “Roadside litter, curbside trash, or a car’s oil leak all can affect our water system when rainwater reaches storm drains and then moves out into the environment.

“By educating the kids, we hope to educate a whole community for future generations,” Davis said.

Scarbrough said that a commitment to education and children is a point of ongoing pride at AUB.

In addition to inviting schools to tour facilities, AUB has many employees who visit schools on behalf of the utility on myriad topics and in conjunction with programs such as Newspapers In Education and Junior Achievement.

“It may sound cliché, but these kids are the future of our community and other communities. AUB is a hometown organization with a vested interest in seeing our community succeed, starting with children,” Scarbrough said. “We enjoy our obligation to support education at all levels.”

In March, AUB’s water was named “Best Tasting” in the region by the Tennessee Association of Utility Districts. AUB’s wastewater treatment plants on Mouse Creek and Oostanaula Creek have won top operating awards annually for more than a decade.

Schools interested in tours of AUB facilities should call the utility’s water division at 745-4501, or contact AUB via email at aub@aub.org.