

Elementary students learn intricacies of water



Sierra House second-grader Aeron Pettus helps his team in the water relay competition on Oct. 3. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Not everyone in the world – even in the United States – has running water. And while this might be common knowledge for adults, students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District have a better understanding of that reality after hauling water from one container to another.

This is just one of the hands-on lessons that is part of Wonders of Water.

Each elementary grade level is spending time outdoors, right

near their campus, learning various aspects of water.

“I learned how invasive species break the life cycle,” Aeron Pettus told *Lake Tahoe News*.

The Sierra House Elementary School second-grader was a tui chub. He was at the top of the food chain – eating the daphnia, which feasted on the phytoplankton. But then an Asian clam came along and disrupted the food chain.

Invasive species and the harm they can do was one lesson the youngsters learned. The importance of cleaning boats was stressed.

At another station in the wooded area beyond the playground students were asked to pay attention to what was growing nearby.

They were quick to know that “trees help you breath” and they “make oxygen.”



Maria Mircheva with the Sugar Pine Foundation talks about trees and bushes. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Maria Mircheva with the Sugar Pine Foundation explained how willows are deciduous – meaning they shed their leaves – and how the Washoe Indians used to use their branches to make baskets.

Manzanita, she told them, means little apple in Spanish. The berries on it are said to look like apples. It falls into the evergreen category, just like the towering pines.

Danielle Morse with South Tahoe Public Utility District explained how most of the water used in South Lake Tahoe comes from wells. But then she got into what happens if you don't have a faucet. That's when the students participated in a relay race to see what it was like to haul water from one area to another without spilling, but still doing so quickly. This was to simulate what it might be like to haul water from a lake to a dwelling.

Other agencies helping on Oct. 3 were the U.S. Forest Service, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Sugar Pine Foundation, and Lake Tahoe Humane Society. Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation and the Optimist Club helped to fund the districtwide program.

All of the instruction meets the state science standards. Each year Beth Quandt, science outreach coordinator for LTUSD, works with teachers and presenters to improve on the stations.

At Sierra House a fence that was just beyond the playground has been removed, which has created an outdoor classroom of sorts.

"Now that the teachers know some of things that are out here they can bring their classes out here to continue the learning," Quandt told *Lake Tahoe News*.