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earth wellness festival fifth year celebration

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Flags fluttered! Yellow school buses were everywhere! And the gleeful sounds of children were invigorating! Yes, earth wellness festival was on its way to a fifth year of educating youth about the environment—to make them better stewards of the earth.

As the youth entered the building, they saw the giant, spectacular kites of Mike and Susan Kunkee. And banners announcing donors and VIP's. Then these students were on their way to several hours of pure excitement...and learning!



At Southeast Community College on Thursday, March 25, approximately 3,000 youngsters and their teachers attended earth wellness festival, making that nearly 16,000 participants in five years. They came to learn about the relationships and interdependency of land, water, air and living resources. Then these youth discovered how their actions impact our planet and...that fifth-graders could enrich the environment.

Through hands-on activities, over 90 presenters and 275 volunteers helped kids and teachers dig, poke, squeeze, dunk, smell and taste—through imagination and discovery youth experienced science in an exciting way. Some youngsters learned how to compost with worms, others made recycled paper, learned



about acid rain, ate chocolate-covered insects. Students discovered that water is a precious resource that must be protected and conserved. Still others explored the world of animals, their habitats and how and why these animals survive, how wind causes erosion, why watersheds and trees are important. And how and why snails can climb over razor blades without injuring themselves.

Otto Rosfeld took them a step back into a simpler time with his music, while Matt "Sitting Bear" Jones acquainted youth with the lives of his native peoples through storytelling. Marsh and Sayre sang environmental songs and the students sang right along. The World Bird Sanctuary taught fifth-graders about birds of prey and how to preserve their populations and habitats. Raptors included hawks, owls, kestrels and eagles. What an exciting

day! A culmination to the study of environmental issues presented to these young students every day!

Thanks to all steering committee members, presenters and volunteers, all organizations and businesses who supported earth wellness festival. The youngsters of Lancaster County appreciated your interest. And...we are making a difference!

Special thanks to earth wellness festival Steering Committee: Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County/UNL, City of Lincoln, The Groundwater Foundation, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, Lincoln Public Schools, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Southeast Community College, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska Water Center and Ventures in Partnerships.



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