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Hoover Elementary's Sixth-Grade Class Wins 2020 Cal Water H2O Challenge

Recycling, Reducing, and Reusing for a More Sustainable Tomorrow

SAN JOSE, Calif., April 27, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Shawn McCarty and his sixth-grade students from Hoover Elementary in Stockton, Calif., gathered on a video conference Friday afternoon thinking they would be helping Principal Dr. Charleen Mah pilot a new distance-learning model. Instead, McCarty and his students learned that their project on recycling and water collection won first place in the 2020 Cal Water H₂O Challenge, and they received the grand prize of a \$3,500 classroom grant, \$1,000 scholarship for each student, and \$100 gift card per student to help support the local economy.

In collaboration with California Water Service, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), and DoGoodery, the Cal Water H₂O Challenge (challenge.calwater.com) is an annual classroom competition for grades 4-6 in schools served by Cal Water. The challenge asks students to tackle a local or global water-related issue through an interactive and collaborative classroom project. This year's grand-prize trip was changed to scholarships due to the school closures.

For their project titled "Water Collectors: Recycle, Reduce, Reuse," McCarty's sixth-graders wanted to find a solution for current and future droughts. Students addressed this issue by substituting the use of potable water with recycled rainwater harvested from self-designed water collectors. As part of the project, students researched the benefits of recycling plastic water bottles and how they could be repurposed as water collectors. Students designed and tested various models and discovered which was the most effective: a single-use, plastic water bottle with a laminated cone attachment. During their three-week collection period, they collected 500 milliliters of rainwater and used it for their classroom hydroponic garden.

Students took their research findings on recycling plastic bottles to the next level and learned about how much local recycling businesses would pay for their recycled bottles. "One of the most amusing successes of the project was the students tracking exactly how much money can be made from recycling plastic. Students are using real-world examples to not only complete credible and accurate research, but also to learn about business opportunities, environmental concerns, and the economics of natural resources," said McCarty.

McCarty described the Challenge as having lifelong effects in his students' daily lives. "With this project, we saw how easy it is to save, store, and recycle water. Several students said they would like to build rain collectors at their homes. I believe they are more likely now to recycle and reuse water in gardens than they were before."

"We are impressed by the creativity and commitment of Mr. McCarty's students to learn about the value of water in our daily lives," said Martin A. Kropelnicki, Cal Water President and CEO. "We are well served when future generations build this foundation and engage in

water issues, so together, we can improve the quality of life in the communities we serve long-term.”

“This competition demonstrates how teachers and students can take real-world problems to create real-world solutions,” said Christiane Maertens, founder of DoGoodery. “Most importantly, this challenge introduces principles of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and NGSS (Next-Generation Science Standards) early on in the classroom in a fun and interactive way, thus creating science-literate citizens of tomorrow.”

Other Cal Water H₂O Challenge winners include:

2nd place: Tammy Janos’ fifth-grade class from Parkview Elementary School in Chico, Calif., designed a home that can conserve and purify water, which would support residents who live in areas with water quality challenges. This class won a \$2,500 classroom grant, along with a \$50 gift card and Cal Water prize pack for each student in the class.

3rd place: Kristen Thomas’ fourth-/fifth-grade class from Little Chico Creek Elementary School in Chico, Calif., introduced a recycling program at school to educate students about the importance of reducing the plastic that gets into local waterways and oceans. The class won a \$2,000 grant, along with a \$50 gift card and Cal Water prize pack for each student.

4th place: Emily Akimoto’s fourth-grade class from Sierra View Elementary School in Chico, Calif., formed committees that focused on water conservation, recycling, reusable items, and energy conservation, and educated students and the community on these practices that can help protect their county’s water supply from climate change. This class won a \$1,000 grant, along with a \$50 gift card and Cal Water prize pack for each class student.

5th place: Mike Buckley’s fifth-grade class from Murdock Elementary School in Willows, Calif., installed a French drain to prevent flooding in their school garden and instead send the potential floodwater to underground storage containers for future use. His class won a \$500 grant, along with a \$50 gift card and Cal Water prize pack for each student in the class.

About Cal Water

California Water Service serves approximately 2 million people through 489,600 customer connections in California. The company has provided water service in the state since 1926. For more information, visit www.calwater.com.

About NAAEE

For four decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy and civic engagement through the power of education. NAAEE supports a network of 20,000 educators and 54 regional affiliate organizations working in environmental education in more than 30 countries. For more information, visit www.naaee.org.

About DoGoodery

DoGoodery is a social impact agency for change makers seeking to do good in the world. DoGoodery offers a wide range of creative services, including strategic planning, program management, design, development, and content distribution. For more information, visit www.dothegoodery.com.