

Press Release

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Live Oak students pull out all the stops for 2021 “Be WaterSmart” contest

Pandemic year makes calendar contest challenging

An annual contest during a pandemic is not an easy thing to conduct. With students challenged in the classroom, mostly learning from home, teachers’ time is stretched thin.

But one teacher didn’t give up on the contest he loves. Guillermo Acevedo, a fourth-grade teacher at Live Oak Elementary, loves the Fallbrook Public Utility District’s “Be WaterSmart” poster contest so much that he found a way.

He’s been doing it for 16 years. This year, he was the only teacher in the school district who participated.

In a non-pandemic year, FPUD’s public relations representative, Noelle Denke, goes to his and other Fallbrook classrooms every October. Denke plays a very hands-on water-trivia bingo game with the students. This gets their minds rolling on what to draw.

The top submissions are chosen for the Be WaterSmart calendar. Typically, there are about 250 entries. This year, there were only 16. And they were all from Acevedo’s class.

“This is by far my favorite contest,” said Acevedo. “As teachers, we are approached with so many contests. This one gives the kids the most recognition. They learn so much, and have so much fun playing water bingo and then making their posters.”

The annual contest is open to all fourth-graders in FPUD’s service area. Teachers play a key role in encouraging or requiring their students to enter. Fourth-graders are chosen because they have studied water conservation and the water cycle in earlier grades.

Since in-person classroom visits were not an option, combined with the uncertainty of if or when students would return to the classroom, Denke wasn’t sure if there would be any participation. Usually teachers are quick to respond and schedule a classroom visit.

“No participation means no calendar,” Denke said. “So I reached out to Mr. Acevedo to see if he had any ideas. Together, we brainstormed. So I extended the deadline, made a video explaining the contest and sent it to all the fourth-grade teachers in the district.”

During a brief, two-week return to the classroom in January, Acevedo worked with his students to make their posters. All 16 submissions came from his class and all are worthy of inclusion in the 2021 calendar.

This will be the first time the calendar will be made up of entries from just one class. It is also the first time FPUD will be producing an 18-month calendar. It will be ready in late February and since the FPUD office is closed to the public due to COVID-19, the free calendar can be picked up at Major Market, Northgate Market, Albertson’s, Joe’s Hardware and the chamber of commerce.

The students and Acevedo will be recognized at a virtual board meeting Feb. 22. The student winners are: 1st place: Jaqueline Rosas, 2nd place: Camila Palma, 3rd place: Liam Rafalski; remaining winners are Noah Varela, Annabella Cunningham, Ewny Sebastian, Bruce Byrd, Edgar Campos, Jocelyn Garcia, Adrian Calderon, Brandon Garcia, Tobin Marshall, Ryder Orozco, Natalie Mendoza, Evan Pellanda and Deisy Ramos.

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