



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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Lee County Students Craft Water Conservation Art

Art classes at 10 middle schools decorated rain barrels that will store water for irrigation



Staff at the South Florida Water Management District's Lower West Coast Service Center recently picked the top designs from among rain barrels decorated by Lee County art students. (Clockwise from left) 1st place, Stacy Peres' class at Gulf Middle School; 2nd place, Teresa West-Taylor's class at North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts; 3rd place, Holly Kurth's class at North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts; some of the other barrels. (Click on the photos for larger versions.)

Fort Myers, FL – Art students at 10 middle schools in northern and western Lee County recently participated in a project designed to highlight the beauty of South Florida's environment – and conserve water.

Sponsored by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), the project involved students from Cape Coral, North Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres and Alva transforming 35-gallon plastic barrels into functional lawn art. In addition to brightening any landscape, these decorative rain barrels will capture and store

rainwater while reducing stormwater runoff that could carry excess nutrients and other pollutants into natural waterways.

Rain barrels are the modern version of cisterns that Florida pioneers used to collect rainwater for the dry season. Pioneers relied on cisterns for drinking water, washing, bathing and crop irrigation.

Today, on a smaller scale, rain barrels help conserve potable water supplies by collecting rainwater that falls on roofs for later use, primarily in landscape irrigation. South Florida residents use an average of 179 gallons of water per person per day – the highest usage in the state. Outdoor irrigation accounts for up to half of all potable water use in the region.

For the art project, the District supplied each participating class with a plain plastic barrel, sandpaper, primer, brushes and clear topcoat. Local Master Gardeners installed the necessary hardware for the barrels. The students then expressed their creativity by decorating the barrels based on the theme of “The South Florida Environment.”

Acting as judges, staff members at the SFWMD’s Lower West Coast Service Center selected the top three rain barrels. The winning classes were:

- **1st place:** Gulf Middle School; Stacy Peres, teacher
- **2nd place:** North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts; Teresa West-Taylor, teacher
- **3rd place:** North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts; Holly Kurth, teacher

Encouraging the use of rain barrels is just one strategy in the District’s Comprehensive Water Conservation Program. The SFWMD Governing Board approved the program in September 2008 to encourage more responsible use of water resources throughout South Florida. Numerous stakeholders worked with the District to define specific regulatory, voluntary and incentive-based programs and in-depth education and marketing plans that will help foster a year-round conservation ethic.

The decorative rain barrels are on display at the SFWMD’s Lower West Coast Service Center, 2301 McGregor Blvd., in Fort Myers, until March 1. For more information, contact Sally McPherson, SFWMD Community Outreach Specialist, at 239-338-2929.

For water conservation tips – including a link to directions on how to make your own rain barrel – please visit www.savewaterfl.com.

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage

and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.