



# Perris News

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## City of Perris Earth Patriots

A group of Pinacate Middle School students from Perris became Earth Patriots over the weekend.

The 11 to 13-year-olds attended an environmental conference in Hemet where they learned the importance of conserving air and water, the need to develop alternative fuels and green technology, the significance of becoming good stewards of Earth's limited resources.

The idea, conference organizers said, was to instill in the youngsters the need to be wise in how they consume nature's bounty and to pass the lessons they learned to the parents, siblings and neighbors.

"We rely on children to tell their parents," said Barbara Spoonhour, a member of the Western Riverside Council of Governments and program manager. "We know they are going to grow up to be the future leaders, so it's important that they are familiar with environmental issues."



Pinacate Middle School students Jannet Nuñez, Karina Mendoza, A.J. Laidler, Luffy Carrera and teacher Tara Paul attended the environmental conference in Hemet.

About 120 students from Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Moreno Valley, Romoland and Hemet took part in the conference, which was held at the Diamond Valley Lake Visitor Center. Presenters included engineers, environmental consultants, water and air quality experts and waste haulers. Students watched a demonstration of a model car crossing a table powered by hydrogen fuel. They also took part in a series of ethical dilemmas and were invited to present their findings to their peers. For instance, they debated the cost and benefits of damming a creek on a piece of property where a housing development was being contemplated.

Were the jobs created and the homes being built worth the damage to the environment, the students debated.

Pinacate teacher Blake Burnett led the contingent of 12 students to the Nov. 1 event.

She said the students, who are enrolled in the school's gifted and talented program, chose to become environmentally aware rather than attend a day of fun at Magic Mountain.

"It's very important to them," Burnett said. "It's going to be their community and it's going to be their responsibility to take care of it."

A.J. Laidler, 13, said he was particularly interested in learning about how to keep the air free of particulates. He suffers from asthma. The dirtier the air, the harder it is to breath. He carries an inhaler with him at all times.

"People should want to know more about their environment," said A.J., an eighth grader.

Karina Mendoza, 13, another 8th grader, said she enjoyed watching the hydrogen-powered car scoot across the table. Such vehicles cost about \$1 million today but the price will drop as they are mass-produced in coming years.

"It was exciting," she said. "I want to learn about conservation. I want to learn more about the Earth."



Teacher Tara Paul looks over the discussion points of Jannet Nunez and Karina Mendoza.

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