

THE PIPELINE

News from the Ventura County Public Works Agency

June 2016

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FROM THE Director's Desk

Jeff Pratt,
Public Works
Agency Director



Dear Friends,

VCPWA has been out in full force this month educating the community with Earth Day displays, tours of solar panel projects, and personal VCPWA tours at the government center!

Thank you to everyone who came out to enjoy National Public Works Week Awareness Day with us. The event was a huge success and we truly enjoyed having all our guests come and learn about everything Ventura County Public Works Agency has to offer. From our outdoor heavy-equipment demonstrations, to career booths and interactive worm displays, guests and staff alike had a great day.

At this year's National Public Works Week Awareness Day event, we were thrilled to introduce two new high-tech exhibits: the interactive topography map, and the new Transportation Department interactive maps. These technology-driven exhibits were extremely popular, and we look forward to featuring them again next year.

We also honored three of our best employees with the VCPWA Employee of the Year Award, recognizing them for their accomplishments and contributions to the Agency. Be sure to take a moment to congratulate them on a job well done! We also honored Janice Turner, Director of Central Services, who retired this month after 35 years of working for the County of Ventura.

Again, a big thank you to all those who made this year's National Public Works Week Awareness Day event the best one yet, and we hope to see everyone next year!

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Pratt".

Jeff Pratt, Director



PUBLIC WORKS DAY Success Among Students

National Public Works Week Awareness Day continues to be an overwhelming success with increased interaction with students and the general public. Not only does this event energize and educate our young visitors on the many facets of VCPWA, but it also opens their minds to the numerous employment opportunities – especially for our high school and college students—there are in Public Works. We have engineers, hydrologists, operations and maintenance professionals, geologists, accountants and more.

VCPWA's volunteer tour guides lined the walkway, decked out in their orange vests and flags anxiously awaiting the students' arrival. The air was abuzz with excitement as the school buses began pulling in with over 550 students from across Ventura County to begin their tours through the variety of booths set out for them that day.

Amidst the busy morning of checking schools in, the tour guides remained calm as well as flexible helping wherever they were needed and are highly commended for their volunteerism. The students, some as young as four years old, toured the exhibits with their tote bags in hand, asking VCPWA representatives a multitude of questions along the way.

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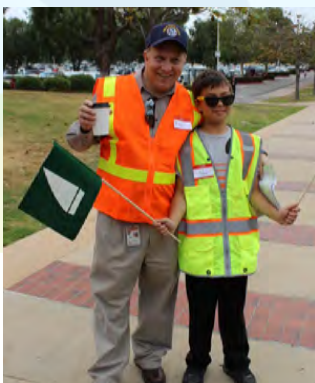
Career booths were available and provided information about exciting career opportunities within the VCPWA to the over 200 hundred high school students in attendance. Each booth was stocked with information regarding the internships and student-worker programs that are available for high school and college students who are interested in gaining professional experience in the Public Works sector. Students were also given the chance to connect with Public Works officials to ask questions about the many job opportunities a career in Public Works may offer.

“It’s really important to give them a step up into the working world where they can spread their wings,” said Theresa Ochoa, a HR Administrative Assistant who was working at the booth.

Amanda Takhar, who works with Ochoa, started off as a student worker when she was in high school and gained valuable experience for her professional career. As Takhar prepares for her graduation from Cal State Channel Islands, she reflected on her time working for Public Works.

“I have definitely learned a lot in my time here, mainly about how the Agency functions,” said Takhar. “We hope to see some of the 550 students who attended the event join our team in the next 10 years.”

In addition to our career booths, students of all ages lined the various hands-on activity stations that had them potting drought-tolerant plants, surveying rain and stream measurements, and making their own traffic signs. The heavy-equipment demonstrations remained an event favorite, and large crowds gathered to see the various pieces of equipment used by VCPWA staff at work sites throughout the County. Both students and adults were given an opportunity to get up close to the equipment and ask VCPWA employees a plethora of questions about the machinery. Students even had the chance to leave their mark in chalk on the bucket!





Games Explain Worm Composting & Rules of Recycling

Two other new and engaging Public Works Day displays gave youngsters a firsthand understanding of how VCPWA is involved with environmental matters. Our Integrated Waste Management Division (IWMD) manages a variety of recycling programs which conserve resources to enhance safety, health and the quality of life in the future. During the event, IWMD's David Goldstein and Lisa McCullough led fun, interactive games explaining benefits and methods of composting with worms and rules of recycling. Over 550 students attended the event to see how red worms can be used to convert food scraps into fertilizer and to learn which items can be recycled in residential carts.



Students learn how to make a composting worm box from David Goldstein

Goldstein showed students boxes of worms from VCPWA's and the General Services Agency's Model Compost site, where worms turn the apple cores, banana peels, carrot tops, and coffee grounds of County workers into fertilizer for GSA's fruit trees. The worms can eat almost anything biodegradable, but IWMD recommends limiting worms to a vegetarian diet to avoid odors and other problems. As a teaching method, Goldstein organized newspaper tearing competitions and worm races. Newspaper torn into strips (approximately 1" wide) and soaked in water makes good bedding for worms, so kids competed to see who could first tear seven strips from a standard newspaper sheet and put it into a bucket of water. The prize was a pencil made from recycled newspaper.

“Residents throw away food waste more than any other item, and right now the only way to recycle that food waste is to have a worm box or a compost bin to turn it into fertilizer,” said Goldstein, “This is important because when food waste goes to the landfill it creates methane gas which is 20 times more powerful than carbon as a greenhouse gas.”

Next, students selected worms for racing. Worms avoid light because they must stay moist to breathe through their skin, so they dive down when placed on top of a pile. The first worm completely covered won. This teaches potential vermicomposters to keep worm boxes moist. If you do not have a shaded spot where you can place a plastic box with drainage holes over soil, you can place the box on top of an upside down, over-sized lid.

At a separate booth, Lisa played game show host to ask the students questions about recycling. Lisa educated the kids about what items are recyclable and which ones should be disposed of in the trash. She also shared some fun trivia about trash and recycling. For example, did you know that IWMD tracks the collection of approximately 167,000 tons of refuse and recyclables from residents and businesses in the unincorporated area of Ventura County annually? That's enough to fill the Pasadena Rose Bowl almost 2 ½ times! Each month, the amount of glass bottles and jars Americans put into landfills is equivalent to filling a giant skyscraper. Also, astoundingly, Americans use 2.5 million plastic bottles...every hour! Most bottles are thrown away, but through education, the goal is to see a change in behavior to conserve earth's resources through reuse, recycling and reduction in waste.

Needless to say, IWMD's booths were guest favorites! We hope students can take this new knowledge and use it at home to help in our efforts to care for our environment.

If you are interested in starting your own worm box, contact the IWMD, at 658-4312. The City of Oxnard (805) 385-7928 sells compost bins and worm boxes to get residents of Oxnard started. The City of Ventura (805) 642-4525 offers discount coupons to Ventura residents for the purchase of composting materials at Green Thumb nursery located at 1899 Victoria Avenue in Ventura.



Two new tech exhibits ***STEAL THE SHOW!***

Students lined up for each of the activity booths, but the real hit at Public Works Day was the addition of two new interactive learning centers!

Students create mountains and valleys in the new interactive topography exhibit as Barbara Council, of WPD in our Groundwater Resources Division explained how elevation topography lines work in maps and on the real-time display.

After viewing the outdoor displays, tour groups were invited indoors to the Atlantic Conference Room for a special presentation by Watershed Protection District's Richard Mendez and Steve Morgan to teach attendees about topography and storm water. Richard and Steve led a hands-on demonstration using topographic projection to show how the lay of the land influences the direction that rain water flows to the ocean and to underground aquifers. The computers calculated topographic lines in real time as we manipulated sand to reconfigure dunes and valleys in our "augmented reality" sandbox. Guests could move around the sand and the projections would change to reflect how the storm water would vary based on the new topography.

"The camera can video down and read the elevation so it can measure how deep or how high the sand is. The children can contour the sand and make mountains, rivers or lakes. Then, when they pull their hand up away from the river or light, it acts like a cloud and it rains," explained Barbara Council,

a Water Resources Specialist. "If they dig a hole it fills up with rain or if they build a hill they can see what happens to the rain on the top of the hill and where it is going to run down. If they build a channel or a damn, they can see what happens if the damn were to break."

Event-goers were ushered into another conference room where they were welcomed by our Transportation Department's Interactive map demonstration hosted by Ben Emami and Howard DeLeon. This demonstration was particularly interesting to our older, tech-savvy guests! High school students were taught all about how our roads work, who maintains them and the best routes to avoid traffic on the way to school. Similar to Google Maps, our Transportation Department created an Internet-based interactive map which is always available on our website. Members of the public can access this map to get information such as when their road was last paved, what roads are scheduled to be paved within the next 5 years, information about construction activities, and status of a construction project that includes the name and phone number of project managers for any roads which are under the County's jurisdiction in the community. Guests were able to see the map in use and how it was developed.





This month we say goodbye to Janice Turner, the Director of the Central Services Department. After over three decades of committed service to Ventura County, Janice decided to retire. For 35 years, Janice worked tirelessly providing her expertise and support to the community and the Public Works Agency. Janice started her career in the Public Social Services Agency, (now the Human Services Agency), and worked her way up from Account clerk, to Fiscal Manager, and was finally promoted to Director of the Center Services Department. Janice has been a shining example of dedication, passion, and leadership in the workplace, and has won numerous awards for her contributions to the Agency. Janice plans to spend her retirement following her dreams; spending time with family and friends, taking tennis lessons, and traveling. Janice's happy demeanor and positive attitude will be greatly missed by all. Congratulations Janice!

School Tour of the Government Center Solar Panel Project

On Wednesday, April 13, 2016, Brian D'Anna and Diana Mendez of the Engineering Services Department gave a tour of the Government Center Solar Panel project to a group of high school students. The students are participating in a solar panel design and installation class provided by the Career Education Center at VCOE and ACE Charter High School.



VCPWA in the NEWS!

STAR Local
Wednesday, May 18, 2016

LEARNING WHAT WORKS
More than 500 students visit the Ventura County Government Center in celebration of National Public Works Day.

LOCAL
Published May 07, 2016
By Jeff Frost, Eye on the Environment

Students have fun with sand at the Ventura County Watershed Protection District's sponsored reality soap opera model as the Ventura County Public Works Agency celebrates National Public Works Day on Tuesday.

LEARNING WHAT WORKS
More than 500 students visited the Ventura County Government Center in Ventura on Tuesday to learn about the county's Public Works Agency — what it is, what it does and what careers it might hold in the future.

In celebration of National Public Works Day, agency employees taught youngsters about their jobs. The students also learned how important it is to understand the interaction of soil and water.

The students also found out about the interactive map on the Public Works website that can be used to pinpoint when roads were last paved and what roads are scheduled to be paved within the next five years, as well as information about construction activities.

Simi Valley Acorn
Agency aims to improve quality of life in the Acorn.

VENTURA COUNTY STAR
Published May 07, 2016
By Jeff Frost, Eye on the Environment

Perma concrete, landfill, historic Ventura County
Published May 07, 2016
By Jeff Frost, Eye on the Environment

Simi Valley Acorn
Agency aims to improve quality of life in the Acorn.

Time Warner Cable
David Fleisch, Director of Transportation, Ventura County Public Works Agency

Amigos805
Bringing culture together by sharing information
Ventura County Public Works Agency highlights careers, hands-on demonstrations for over 500 students

CitizensJournal
Real News for Real People
Agency highlights careers, over 500 students

Congratulations

to 2016's Employees of the Year Recipients!



Denise Santoyo



Jozi Scholl



Frank Ceja

At this year's National Public Works Week Awareness Day, three employees were awarded the "Employee of the Year Award". This award is given to employees with outstanding work ethic, leadership skills, and dedication to the job. Congratulations to this year's winners, Denise Santoyo, Jozi Scholl, and Frank Ceja.

Denise Santoyo has proven to be an invaluable asset to VCPWA. Her hard-working, detail oriented nature allowed her to excel in her previous position and she has recently been promoted to the GSA. "It's a huge honor to be nominated as the PWA Employee of the Year, let alone given the award", said Santoyo. "I try to be a good teacher and a good trainer, as well as the best assistant I can to both my department and, especially, my director, and it means everything to me that my coworkers thought I deserved this recognition. I truly felt fortunate to be singled out by my team and my director, and want to thank them for their support all year long."

Jozi, is the Staff Services Manager for the PWA Water and Sanitation Department. She has taken the lead on a number of critical issues facing the Department over the past year, including development of an Agricultural Water Management Plan, creation of a drought response plan, and a massive water public outreach campaign. She is a tireless worker whose high standards and unmatched work ethic are a shining example for all PWA employees. When asked about winning the award, Jozi replied, "I am truly honored to be recognized as PWA Employee of the Year. It has been an extremely challenging year for the Water & Sanitation Department due to the drought situation, state mandates, and water supply shortage. However, this has provided a unique learning opportunity and all that was accomplished would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of my staff, and the support of my director."

Frank Ceja of the Watershed Protection District has demonstrated a commitment to the Department and a strong work ethic. His winning personality and positive outlook were what put him over the edge to win the award. Look for more insight from Frank in an upcoming feature article in next month's edition of *Pipeline*. We also give a big congratulations to all this year's nominees!





Earth Day

EVERY DAY!



At their April 19 meeting, the Board of Supervisors presented their annual Ventura County Earth Day Awards. These awards honor environmental champions from each supervisorial district. This year's honorees were: District 1 – Supervisor Steve Bennett and the Happy Valley Bioswale, a collaboration between the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

Adolfo Camarillo High School Earth Day Fair

The Ventura County Watershed Protection District's County Stormwater Program was invited by Camarillo High School's Naturally Green Environmental Club to participate in their lunchtime Earth Day Fair on April 22, 2016, at Adolfo Camarillo High School.

Water Quality Planner, David Laak, provided information and handouts to the interested students on a wide range of stormwater pollution prevention topics and described the various projects that have been recently completed by County Stormwater Program. These include the Happy Valley Bioswale Project in Meiners Oaks, the Green Streets Retrofit at County Government Center Project, and the El Rio Retrofit for Groundwater Recharge Project.



The interest and enthusiasm from the students and their great questions and input made the event a very successful one for everyone involved!