

Children, parents celebrate Earth Day with storytelling

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Children's Branch hosts event on environmental awareness

Earth Day is a worldwide occasion held yearly on April 22, with 1 billion people celebrating in 192 countries, according to earthday.org—including right here in Gallup. Faced with littered landscapes and waste-clogged streams and landfills, Earth Day aims to change human attitudes and behaviors when it comes to keeping our shared lands free of pollution.

Storyteller Ellen McAllister-Flack hosted “Earth Day Stories” April 21 at The Children’s Branch, bringing students, parents, and concerned citizens of all ages and backgrounds together to confront the issues facing today’s environment.

A teacher by trade, McAllister-Flack is a frequent guest at the library and is often invited to the events the library holds. She was recently involved in the library’s African-American Black History Week celebration, where she read stories and sang.

“I just love doing this with reading, singing, and teaching to be thankful about Mother Earth,” she said. “We need to be thankful for all the gifts the earth gives us and to take good care of it, this earth is one country and we’re all its citizens so we have to take care of it.”

McAllister-Flack began the Earth Day event by asking the kids if the earth made noises. She asked if they heard sounds like raindrops, lightning, and thunder. Children offered up different answers before coming up front and receiving various instruments, including rattles and drums.

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Parents also stood up and sang along with them to “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” while the kids made noises with their instruments.

McAllister-Flack then read a story called “Earth Day” to engage the children in thinking about how the earth might feel when people throw litter and trash on it. This brought on a quiet moment.

“The earth is sad when there is litter on it, isn’t it?” she asked the audience. “We want the earth to be happy, we want the birds to sing, for the animals to be happy and that makes us happy, doesn’t it. We must do our part and not litter so that we can enjoy what the earth gives back. The earth is always responding when we take off our shoes and walk on the grass, it gives us a good feeling when we respond positively.”

The children then crafted paper earth figures and covered them with green paper for trees and other decorations. They also painted little earth medallions.

Anne Price, youth services manager for The Children’s Branch, said she asked McAllister-Flack to host the event because of her enthusiasm and how well she interacts with kids. Price said she would be good to tell the children what Earth Day is all about in her own unique way.

“Ellen is our guest storyteller today, she is local to Gallup and we’ve had her here before,” she said. “I like the way she tells stories, she’s a charismatic storyteller—the way she introduces the stories, instruments, she’s a lot of fun.

Jennifer Calderaz of Gallup comes to the library weekly with her children, 7-year-old Chloe and 5-year-old Paul, to see what programs are offered on the weekends. She said visiting the library is a nice way to get out of the house and lure the kids away from the television.

“We just happened to come at the perfect time. We usually know about other events on their calendar but today was totally just luck,” Calderaz said of the Earth Day event. “I like the little keepsakes they’re doing today, it’s cute and they’re entertained. Plus, it’s better they’re not at home fighting over who gets to watch what on TV.”

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Chloe Calderaz enjoyed making crafts while learning about Earth Day.

“I like doing the painting on the little medallion that looked like earth,” she said.

For more information on activities at The Children’s Branch, call (505) 726-6120, or visit website at www.childlib@gallupnm.gov .

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