

Radney students learn about world water quality

Staff Reports

The Outlook

Thirty students at Alexander City's Radney Elementary School took an imaginary trip around the world on Thursday Jan. 5 when two speakers from Auburn University gave a program about how people from different countries view the importance of water.

Dr. Bill Deutsch, Director of Alabama Water Watch, and staff member Sergio Ruiz-Cordova presented a program to Teacher Laurie Barrett's fifth grade class and used hats they had collected in their travels.

Students modeled hats from Thailand, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, Pakistan, Equador and the Philippines and listened to native music from those countries while their classmates guessed where the hats were from.

The students then heard about water conditions in each of the countries and learned about the different cultures.

Following the program, stu-

dents guided the guest speakers on a hike through the woods behind the school and demonstrated the use of ropes to help them cross a stream they named Barrett Creek.

Along the way they learned to identify trees, plants and examined tracks made by deer, raccoons and turkey.

"I learned that Beechnut gum is made from the nut of the Beech tree," commented Madison Marbury as she chewed a leaf from one of the biggest trees in the woods. "That gum must not taste very good!"

Chantz Tilley said, "They do a lot to help people around the world make their water better."

As a part of their work with Alabama Water Watch and their overseas partner Global Water Watch, Dr. Deutsch and Mr. Ruiz have travelled to more than two dozen countries to introduce the concept of citizen monitoring of water resources and to help people understand how to address problems with pollution and

poor land use practices.

They developed the innovative technique of using hats and music to teach environmental stewardship while including world geography, social values, science, cultural differences, and an understanding of how the shortage or over-abundance of water affects the lives of millions of people around the globe.

Barrett said she was excited about the learning experience for the students.

"This was a wonderful way to begin our new year having students see that people in other countries use the same test kit that they are learning to use," she said. "They were also able to make the connection that people in countries where rain is scarce, harvest water using big tanks just like we do to sustain our pond at the school."

Barrett became certified by AWW in 2010 because of students' concern about the cleanliness of a nearby stream.

The program, arranged by Lake Watch of Lake Martin, is



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Hat trick: Students learned about various countries around the world as well as the country's water conditions.

in its second year of an effort to bring environmental education to the classroom.

Lake Watch has committed to support Barrett's classes through school year 2012-2013 and beyond.

Other planned events include the following:

- "Discovering Nature Through the Lens of a Camera"
- observing a fish spawn-

ing event

■ a class on the use of satellite and photo-imaging to assess water quality, a fish electro-shocking demonstration

■ a trip to Ben Russell's grist mill on Elkahatchee Creek where students will conduct a water quality assessment by collecting aquatic macroinvertebrates