



ChemFriends Exposition 2011 Ascension Parish

Early this November, DEQ staff participated in Ascension Parish's 15th annual ChemFriends Exposition at the Gonzales Civic Center. The event, centered on encouraging and improving an interest in chemistry among middle school students, is a collaborative effort of the Ascension Parish School Board, various Ascension Parish industries and other agencies.

More than 1,800 sixth grade students from across Ascension Parish participated in this educational event to help them understand chemistry. As the students rotated among the many booths, they experienced fun, hands-on activities that demonstrate the role of chemistry in our everyday lives. They participated in experiments such as making silly putty to quick freezing flowers to making "mini washing machines" in glass tubes.

At the DEQ booth, employees demonstrated "kitchen chemistry", a practical, hands-on activity using different solutions typically found in the kitchen to test the pH. The juice from a purple cabbage is used as the pH indicator to test whether items are acids, bases or neutral. Test items included orange juice, baking soda, dish liquid, fabric softener, lemon juice, vinegar, water, Sprite, lemon juice, Tums and ammonia. Students were divided into two teams and earned points for correct answers. DEQ employees took turns conducting the experiments.

"DEQ employees have participated in the Ascension Parish ChemFriends Exposition since its inception 15 years ago," said Alex Appeaning, DEQ Deputy Secretary. "This is such a wonderful opportunity for these students to get hands-on experience with chemistry. They have fun while learning practical applications for chemistry in the home and industry in a way they can easily understand."

ChemFriends Exposition winds up with a nighttime opening that allows families of the sixth graders and the general public to attend. At the nighttime event, many items are given out to the public.

