



GVSUD Newsletter June Edition

by: Ashlyn Ford

Our Santa Clara Creek Treatment Facility welcomed Marion High School's AP Environmental Science Class. Clair and her team gave the class a tour and a science lesson on wastewater treatment.

The class toured around our facility, where they viewed microorganisms under our microscope and each stage of the treatment process, bringing their classroom education to life.

Clair started by giving a presentation to the students. You could see the enthusiasm on their faces. As hands raised, I had to remind myself that these were high schoolers! Their questions were insightful, and the vocabulary used matched college rather than high school, indicative of their exceptional education from Marion ISD.

The students asked about different types of chemicals present in wastewater. They were interested in our sustainable practices and explored how they could help. We talked about phosphate in shampoos and its impact on water resource recovery efforts.

"So, we are all switching shampoos, right?" one student said, leading their class into more sustainable living practices.

During the presentation, many of the students asked fun and exciting questions. While discussing what not to flush down the toilet. I was surprised by one question.

"If we have a pet fish, do they end up at a wastewater treatment plant after being flushed?" The question caused the class to gasp; thankfully, no fish had been found at our facility. This answer summoned a sigh of relief from the class. The students learned we find the occasional toy or car keys from a mischievous toddler and money from a generous washing machine. However, we mostly find garbage





that belongs in the bin, not the treatment facility. Things like feminine products, FOG (Fats, Oils, and Grease), and “flushable” wipes can clog pipes. Yes, even “flushable” wipes can clog pipes, which can be expensive. With the communities’ help, we know we can reduce pipe-clogging products from being flushed down the toilet.

Next, we headed outside for a tour of the treatment plant with Ramon. He talked about the process of water resource recovery and how bacteria are primarily responsible for treating wastewater. He reinforced that wastewater treatment plants treat unsafe wastewater so it is safe, sanitary, and can be reused.

Last, we took a look through the microscope. The screen was filled microscopic bits and pieces. Something moved in the corner, drawing the students’ attention. It was a Paramecium! Their eyes raced across the screen,

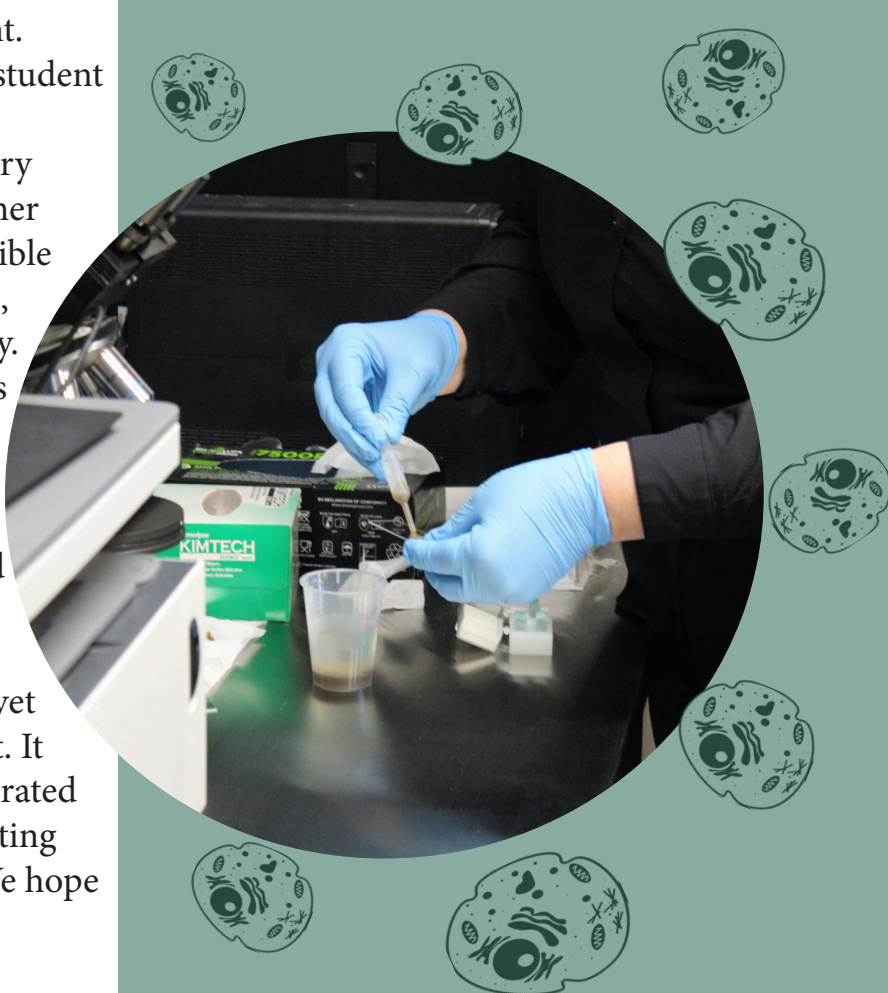
following the microorganism’s movement.

“I want to name this one Pam!” a student declared.

The students were eager to see every little detail, and Clair was keen to share her knowledge. The combination was incredible as students hovered over the microscope, excitedly searching for the next discovery. Curiosity washed over the students’ faces as they found a long, bright green specimen. Their eyes widened as Clair talked them through what they were seeing.

“You can see this is algae,” she said to the students. “You can see the chloroplast here.”

The tour was winding down, and yet the students had looks of glee as they left. It was exciting to see the students so exhilarated by the tour, knowing they are contemplating their future and who they want to be. We hope to see them again during an interview.



Phosphate-free Shampoos

As we trend towards sustainability, there is a huge push to use phosphate-free shampoos. There are many reasons for switching, so let's explore some below.

Whatever you wash out of your hair has to go somewhere. It usually ends up in a Water Resource Recovery Facility, where it gets treated. However, this chemical can hinder the treatment processes. Making the switch helps out facilities like ours

The switch can also help your hair, as phosphate-free shampoos help with dry and color-treated hair.

So help your hair and the environment by switching to phosphate-free shampoo.



The Faces of GVSUD Gabriel Cantu

Gabe, a native Schertz resident, is our Construction and Inspection Manager, but who was he before, and what led him to our door?

"I went into the military straight out of High School," he said.

The military taught Gabe about computers and management. He learned many valuable lessons about being a successful leader thanks to the military, as have many of the staff at GVSUD. He later left in 1997 and moved his skills into his next career.

"I went into electric work to help people," he said.



Helping people has been Gabe's goal from career to career. Electric work allowed him to do that by helping restore power and bettering the community. He loved this job. However, a new policy changed his path.



"The company said that workers would have to be 20 minutes away from the headquarters, I have three kids, and we would have to move to Northern New Braunfels [...] I ended up finding a job with GVSUD," he said.

We were lucky he did. He checked every box on the application, found his place among the linemen, and began to get to work and lead his crew. The feeling of helping never left as he started working with us.

"Whenever we get to go fix a leak, I feel great knowing I helped restore water to someone's house," he said.

Gabe is excited to be able to help our ratepayers fix leaks and restore water. He is always there to ensure that our ratepayers are taken care of.