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Middle schools get trashy

Students at Wilson, Roosevelt and Rosemont take part in a contest to recycle the most.

By Angela Hokanson
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A flock of Wilson Middle School students snapped their hands into plastic gloves during lunch on Wednesday and set out across campus to gather up what some might dismiss as mere trash.

They carried boxes and bags of plastic bottles and aluminum cans from around school to a trio of dumpsters, and went to work sorting through the recyclables and tossing them into the appropriate containers.

"It's tough but we're having fun," said Oscar Guerrero, 13, about the manual labor.

The students were three days into a weeklong, city-organized contest called the Middle School Recycling Challenge, in which local middle schools vie to collect the largest quantity of recyclable bottles and cans. The challenge takes place during the city's Clean and Beautiful Glendale Week, which began on Sunday.

This is the third year the city has run the contest, which serves to educate youth about the importance of recycling, said Sandra Rodriguez, a program coordinator with the city's Neighborhood Services Department.

"It's just a healthy way to get kids involved," she said.

Roosevelt Middle School, Rosemont Middle School and Wilson Middle School are the three schools participating in this year's contest, Rodriguez said.

At Wilson, the students leading the collection effort are members of the Junior Ambassadors club, an environmental awareness program created by the city.

The club has set out to collect one pound — or about 32 cans or bottles — of recyclables per student. If each student did that, the school would have about 1,000 pounds of bottles — the approximate amount that Rose-



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Wilson Middle School students sort recyclables on Wednesday. It is part of a recycling competition between Wilson, Roosevelt and Rosemont middle schools.

mont Middle School won the contest with last year. "We're definitely trying hard," said Beth Gruss, 13. "We're putting up the best fight that we can."

So far, Wilson has filled one

dumpster two-thirds of the way with cans, and two small dumpsters full of plastic bottles, students said.

Students and staff are bringing in bottles and cans from home, and recycling the drinks

they buy at school.

At Roosevelt Middle School, members of the club California Junior Scholarship Federation have been giving out

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Smarties candy to students who recycle at lunch, said Crystal Ventura, 13.

Recycling is important, Crystal explained, because it prevents trash from accumulating in landfills.

"It's teaching us to help out around the Earth," Crystal said. Students have been sorting the donations after school.

"It does get pretty messy," Crystal said.

At Rosemont Middle School, the defending recycling champion, students and their families have already filled three dumpsters full of recyclables, teacher Lynn McGinnis said. McGinnis said Rosemont plans on retaining its title.

"But we'd like to see a close competition," he said.

At the end of the week, the participating schools' collections will be weighed and tallied at the city's integrated waste center. The winning school — the school that collects the greatest number of bottles and cans per student — will be honored at a City Council meeting later this spring, Rodriguez said.



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Wilson Middle School students Nick Skowronski, 13, and Elizabeth Harris, 13, check a recycle bin on Wednesday to see how much was collected.