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GRAPEVINE'S GO WILD PROGRAM RECEIVES TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE GRANT TO HELP CONNECT KIDS TO NATURE

GRAPEVINE, TEXAS – May 2, 2019 – The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) awarded funds to the City of Grapevine Parks and Recreation's (GPARD) GO Wild Program, a community-based, hands-on, education program designed to help the community enjoy, learn about, and care for our natural treasures.

The grant was awarded from the TPWD's Community Outdoor Outreach Program (CO-OP), a program established to provide opportunities for Texans to connect with nature and the GO Wild Program aims to do just that. With support from the \$43,662 grant, GPARD will bring more than 2,200 students from Title I schools on field trips to Grapevine parks to explore natural habitats, practice environmental stewardship, and enjoy outdoor recreation activities. The goal behind this initiative is to partner with local schools, increase awareness and appreciation of our natural environment among youth and inspire environmental stewardship.

"We are so excited to bring these children outside to our parks to have fun and learn about our awesome natural world," said Betsy Marsh, Environmental Education Coordinator for Grapevine Parks and Recreation. "In addition to field trips, this grant will also help us enhance outdoor classrooms, restore native habitat on school campuses, and launch a career development program for high school students focused on horticulture, habitat restoration, and environmental education.

Since the GO Wild Program's inception in 2017, we have educated more than 3,600 students and worked with more than 1,000 community members, engaging them in studying local plants and animals, monitoring waterways, and restoring wildlife habitat in Grapevine parks. A total of 54% of the students who participated in our field trips were from Title I schools and could participate only because our already-low field trip fees and the school's transportation costs were subsidized by a grant from a local foundation. The TPWD's CO-OP grant will help GPARD continue to serve these children in our community who may have less opportunities to enjoy nature and outdoor recreation activities.

"The purpose of applying for this grant was to introduce under-represented audiences to environmental education, conservation and outdoor recreation," says Kevin Mitchell, Director of Grapevine Parks and Recreation. "This initiative aligns with our Core Value of Conservation and commitment to preserving natural resources and wildlife habitats and connecting children to nature. This value is also something that the National Recreation and Parks Association identifies as one of the three pillars in which all Parks and Recreation agencies should instill in their communities."

The next GO Wild event is iNaturalist Explorers happening this Saturday, May 4 at Parr Park (3010 Parr Lane) from 9:00 to 10:30am. Participants will learn about wildlife-friendly, native Texas plants that grow in our parks and use the iNaturalist app to identify and document them. To register for this event, visit GoGrapevine.com.



Timberline Elementary students work with native plants at the Botanical Gardens.

For information on the GO Wild Program, visit GoGrapevine.com/GOWild.