



SOIL AND PLANT SCIENCE DIVISION

Technical Soil Services

Southwest Soil Survey Region

Tucson, Arizona Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Soil Survey Office (SSO)

Mountain Trail Middle School Harvest Festival 2024

Purpose

On November 8, 2024, staff from the Tucson and Globe, Arizona, MLRA SSOs operated a booth at the Mountain Trail Middle School (MTMS) Harvest Festival in Phoenix. The event was an excellent opportunity to elevate students' knowledge of soil science, ecology, and geology. The event was an opportunity for staff to continue developing the SSOs' partnership with MTMS and to get the word out about natural resource conservation.

Background

MTMS hosts an annual harvest festival that allows students to interact with environmental organizations from across Arizona. It includes local, state, and federal agencies, private companies, and other organizations that manage natural resources. The Tucson MLRA SSO often participates in environmental outreach events at MTMS due to its ongoing partnership with Brian Minnick, who teaches an Environmental Adventures class. Cody Folk from the Globe MLRA SSO and Michael Piotrowski from the Tucson MLRA SSO brought outreach materials including soil samples, gypsum and calcium carbonate samples, dried plants, soil survey tools, and stress toys from the Arizona state office to get students to check out the booth (figs. 1 and 2). They also brought the state office's inflatable soil tunnel, which is always a hit with the middle school students. The event is open to the entire school and the students' families, so Folk and Piotrowski interacted with hundreds of students and community members over the course of the afternoon event.

Key Outcomes

The Tucson and Globe MLRA SSOs staff networked with other conservation organizations that attended the Harvest Festival, which will promote better relationships and communication with the organizations that may work with the NRCS in the future. By



providing education and outreach to MTMS students, staff inspired students to think more about the soil and plants that they depend on and encouraged the next generation to be environmentally conscious stewards of the land. By participating in events at MTMS, Tucson and Globe MLRA SSO staff continue to elevate people's knowledge of soil.



Figure 1.—A sidewalk chalk drawing done by the students at MTMS0 for the booth.



Figure 2.—Michael Piotrowski (left) and Cody Folk (right) standing at their booth. MTMS students gave them the hand-drawn sign for their table, taped at the front. The inflatable soil tunnel is visible in the back of the picture.