



## Latino youth leaders interested in STEM career fields visit Hoover Dam



ABOVE – Hoover Dam Manager Rob Skordas, standing left, enthusiastically welcomed the students for an educational day at Hoover Dam. Standing along the counter are four of the escorts for the day. Left to right, they are Steve Valderrama, Steve Redmond, Brandon Sparks and Ruben Martinez. BELOW – Steve McHargue, second from left, explains to the students how water from the Lake Mead enters the intake towers and passes through the dam to generate electricity. *LCR photos by Steve León*



“Today was really fun,” said Yseñia, a 17-year-old student from Hollister, Calif., whose visit to Hoover Dam on June 18 was a real-time experience that complemented a school assignment two years ago!

“Our guide took us everywhere,” she added. “We also took many pictures. It was a very fun experience. I once

did a project and a presentation about Hoover Dam in my sophomore year. I never really understood it until I came here. This made it real for me!”

Yseñia was one of about 20 students who visited Hoover Dam that day as part of partnership between LULAC (the League of United Latin American Citizens) and the Department of the Interior to promote the



ABOVE – Brandon Sparks, second from right, points to a diagram to explain to the students how water flowing through Hoover Dam generates electricity. BELOW – Keith Cooper, right in plaid shirt) follows students down a staircase to ensure they are all safe as they head for a close-up look at a penstock. *LCR photos by Steve León*



participation among Latinos in STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics) career fields.

The group was among about 260 high school and college-aged students, who are taking part in a national youth leadership development program partnership among LULAC, the University of Las Vegas (UNLV), and DOI.

Ymela, 16, of Oklahoma City, Okla., said, “I thought today was a really good day. I learned a lot from the tour, and saw lots of pretty views.”

Adding to those remarks, Sabina, 15, said, “I thought this tour

was very informational and it taught us a lot.”

“I thought today was very amazing. It was a once in a lifetime experience,” declared Victoria, 18. She and the other two students were from Oklahoma City, also.

Two UNLV students Braulio, 18, and David, 18, added their praise for their experience at the dam.

“I’m a local escort and I’m glad we could come here. It was great a tour,” said Braulio. “Thanks.”

“The tour was amazing,” David said. “We saw so many things that a lot of people don’t get to see. That’s what I loved about the tour.”



While walking on the main floor of the powerplant, the students were very impressed with the size of the turbines. *LCR photo by Steve León*

Other students from Hollister accompanying Yseñía on the tour included Maríana, 18, who said, “I liked the tour. It was really interesting. I liked how they talked about the turbines and how they generate power.”

“I thought this was a great experience because I got to see new things,” said Nancy, 15. Ygeñía, 17, added, “I thought this experience was eye-opening because it changed my view of what I want to study. It showed me new options and opportunities of what to major in.”

To this fellow Hollister student Martín, 17, added, “It was a great experience I had today. “All the things we saw were wonderful.”

When the students arrived at Hoover Dam, they were greeted by Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Specialist **Yvette Scott**.

On hand to offer an enthusiastic welcome to the group was Hoover Dam Manager **Rob Skordas**, who said he hoped

they found their time there to be educational and informative. He also introduced the group of employees who would serve as escorts. This included Electrician **Steve Redmond**, SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) Engineer **Steve McHargue**, Hydro-power Engineer **Keith Cooper**, Hydroelectric Mechanic **Ruben Martinez**, Chief of Maintenance **Steve Valderrama**, Site Development Coordinator **Jed Blake**, and Electronic Equipment Mechanic **Brandon Sparks**.

About the day’s activities and Region’s participation, Scott said, “The students were all awesome, were very appreciative of this opportunity, and seemed interested in some of the careers we have here at Hoover.”

She also offered, “. . . ‘big’ thanks to Rob Skordas for welcoming the students and **Tracie Lopata**, **Bill Schermerhorn**, and **Kathy Stewart** for assisting in organizing the morning’s activities.



Few people leave Hoover Dam without at least one souvenir photo. So it was with the students. ABOVE LEFT – This group of students posed with their escorts Jed Blake, left, and Steve Redmond, third from left. ABOVE RIGHT – Two members of the group pose with their escort Brandon Sparks, right. LEFT – This group posed with their escorts Ruben Martinez, left, and Brandon Sparks, second from right, at the Arizona Stoney Gate. *LCR photos by Steve León*

Additionally, she extended a ‘thank you’ to Steve Valderrama, Keith Cooper, Steve McHargue, Steve Redmond, Ruben Martinez, and Brandon Sparks for giving the tours to the students!”

Scott also thanked **Georgie Willis** for the “great behind the scenes preparation assistance for the day,” which included gathering Bureau of Reclamation existing materials for distribution to the students.

EEO staff members provided snacks, bottled water, and the ingredients and condiments for



The students' morning concluded with lunch highlighted with closing remarks by Supervisory Apprentice Coordinator Bill Schermerhorn, who spoke to the students about the apprenticeship opportunities at Hoover Dam. *Photos courtesy of Yvette Scott*

sandwiches for the students' lunch at the conclusion of their Hoover Dam tour.

EEO Manager **Linda Rivera** commented on the day saying, "We are happy to assist in educational activities that will encourage and motivate students into STEM related academics. STEM careers are a mainstay for Reclamation. Our challenge is being visible to the few that pursue these occupations; we want them to consider Reclamation as their future employer!"

In addition to Reclamation, the DOI agencies in southern Nevada that hosted students included the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

Partner organizations participating in this STEM outreach also included the Student Conservation Association, Outdoor Las Vegas Foundation, Forever Resorts, Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association, Friends of Red Rock Canyon, Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Great Basin Institute and Black Canyon River Adventures.

