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Local News

"Gulfton Ghetto" kids hit the high seas

At-risk youngsters exposed to environmentalism

06/24/2002

By Carolyn Campbell / 11 News

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GALVESTON (KHOU) -- Making a difference in young people's lives could turn out to be a good thing for Galveston Bay. Through the efforts of several non-profit groups, city kids spent the day on a floating classroom.

On Monday afternoon, a group of 10-year-olds stepped into a new world.

"I think it's kind of cool," said Eddie Salgado. "I never been in a boat, so I like it.

in fact, only one of the children has ever been on a boat. They could hardly contain their excitement as they began their lesson on the bay, getting a firsthand look at some of the marine life that inhabits the water.

"Everybody's got to make sure that we take care of this bay," a volunteer tells them.

Volunteer experts share their knowledge about the bay, the port and how it all works together, "to let them know that Galveston Bay is so important to us (not only) from an environmental standpoint, but an economic standpoint, too," says Dr. Huey Barnett of the Baysmart Program.

Galveston Bay is quite a switch for these youngsters who are from the Gulfton area in southwest Houston. Most of them are considered at risk for dropping out of school or getting involved with gangs.

"The whole point is to expose these kids to a world that they don't even know exists. Get them out of their box, out of their backyard," Barnett says.

"I just like going on the water," says Oscar Bayo, one of the boys who

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went on the boat trip Monday.

"I don't like how people like throw trash in the water," says Gilbert Quevado, another youngster on the trip.

Organizers hope this floating classroom will not only help Galveston Bay, but also make a difference in the lives of these kids.

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