

## 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**

#### **Purpose**

On November 9, 2023, the Tucson and Globe, Arizona, SSOs were invited to occupy a booth at the Mountain Trail Middle School (MTMS) Harvest Festival in Phoenix. Participating in the festival allowed NRCS staff to not only elevate students' knowledge of soil science, ecology, and geology, but it also provided an opportunity for the NRCS to continue its participation in events at this school highlighting its partnership with MTMS.

#### **Background**

MTMS has an Environmental Adventures elective centered in environmental education. As a part of this course, the instructor puts on a Harvest Festival for the fall and invites a variety of groups including government agencies, local businesses, environmental companies, and county or state entities to participate in booth events for the middle schoolers. The Tucson SSO has participated in a total of six events at MTMS including a two-day course on soils and ecology for the Environmental Adventures class, multiple Earth Days, and multiple Harvest Festivals. For this event, the Globe SSO brought a variety of geological materials to discuss land formations in Arizona, and the Tucson SSO brought outreach materials such as posters, booklets, and a seed ball activity for participants at its booth (figure 1). In addition to these materials, NRCS staff brought the inflatable soil tunnel from the State office (figure 2). By the end of this event, NRCS staff had met and talked with multiple returning students as well as new students interested in the world of soils, ecology, and geology.



Figure 1.—Soil Scientist Cody Folk (left) from Globe SSO next to Soil Scientist Andreas Khechfe (right) from Tucson SSO demonstrating effervescent soils and discussing Arizona geology.



Figure 2.—Ecological Site Specialist Mike Piotrowski (left) with Soil Scientist Cody Folk (middle) and Soil Scientist Andreas Khechfe (right) under the inflatable soil tunnel at MTMS.



## Key Outcomes

By the end of this event, NRCS staff had elevated students' knowledge of the natural world while continuing to cultivate the NRCS' ongoing relationships with government agencies, local businesses, environmental companies, and county or state entities, MTMS, and of course. In the future, the Tucson SSO and the Globe SSO will continue participating in MTMS's Harvest Festivals and Earth Day Events as well as plan middle-school-level day courses for students in the Environmental Adventures elective.