

## Moon mission no failure in Moreno Valley students' eyes

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Pheadra Gueste is looking forward to a future of children, grandchildren and space exploration.

And she has her heart set on where she will live.

"When someone asks my family, 'Where does your grandma live,' they'll say, 'She lives on the moon,'" said Pheadra, 10, of Moreno Valley.

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Students at North Ridge Elementary School, create "moon craters" in a box of flour and cocoa as an experiment. **Special to The Press-Enterprise**

Pheadra is one of 25 students at North Ridge Elementary School in Moreno Valley who, on Friday wrapped up a three-day mission to help NASA search for water on the moon.

**The school got involved in the mission through the Lewis Center for Educational Research in Apple Valley. The center teamed with NASA to lead students in the mission.**

Early Friday, NASA's Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite, called LCROSS and pronounced L-Cross, crashed into the moon's surface as planned.

As the first stage hit the surface, the second stage, which crashed four minutes later, recorded the event.

But the expected giant plume of moon dust did not materialize when the shuttle crashed. Scientists had hoped the second stage would travel through the plume and send back information about possible water content.

While NASA didn't get the full results it wanted, it was a learning experience that the North Ridge fifth-graders may never forget.

On Wednesday, the 25 students enrolled in the school's Goldstone Apple Valley Radio Telescope Club, simulated the shuttle's crash into the moon's surface.

Students created "craters" by dropping marbles and a tennis ball into a box of flour covered with a dusting of cocoa powder.

"When we dropped it, there were rays of the flour on the Hershey powder. It was like an explosion," said Kennedy Hill.

On Thursday, students Katherine Ontiveros and David Matler helped NASA control the satellite that fed signals to the space shuttle.

"We used it to track the health and speed of LCROSS," David said.

Camryn Purdom sat next to Katherine as they watched the satellite on a computer screen in the school's "mission control" room.

With the help of fifth-grade teacher David Coopsmith, the girls used a calculator to measure the shuttle's speed and distance from the earth.

"We calibrated where it was going," Katherine said.

Hannah Castleman said she's excited about being a part of the moon mission and is looking forward to following NASA's future moon explorations.

NASA's research will tell a lot about the moon's surface and the previous objects that crashed there, like "asteroids, rocks and maybe life," Hannah said.

But water could be the most exciting moon discovery, said Amelia Romano.

"We could colonize the moon. It could be a station for space travel," Amelia said. "We could live there and go out farther into space."

Christopher Garza is fascinated by the prospects of moon colonization, but his interest goes beyond the academic.

He's curious.

"People keep saying there's life on Mars," Christopher said. "I want to know if it's true or not."

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