Time for Environmental Education

Environmental Education Awards
About the Awards:

Environmental Education Program Awards

Initiated in 1996, CAEE Environmental Education Program Awards honor leadership in developing effective, cooperative, cross-sector environmental education programs. The 2005 recipients have demonstrated success in developing and implementing innovative environmental education programs and partnerships.

Enos Mills Lifetime Achievement Award

This award for significant achievement is named after Enos Mills, “founder” of Rocky Mountain National Park, and is presented by CAEE to individuals for their long-term, outstanding achievements and contributions to environmental education (EE). Enos Mills spent his life discovering and experiencing nature, and working tirelessly to preserve it by sharing its benefits with others through guiding, writing and photographs. Like Enos Mills, the award recipients have demonstrated leadership and commitment to the field of EE through a significant body of work.

Please visit the displays to learn more about these outstanding programs and individuals.

Call for Nominations

2006 Environmental Education Awards

Do you know of a successful environmental education program in a school, business, public agency or local community? Do you know of individuals or organizations working together to provide quality environmental education?

If so, please nominate your program or theirs for a CAEE Environmental Education Award! Award categories include: PreK-12 Education, Higher Education, Citizen/Community, Media, Business, Nonprofit, Agricultural, Religious/Spiritual, Government and Best New Program.

Pick up a nomination form today, or visit http://www.caee.org to download a nomination form.

Nominations must be sent or postmarked by Friday, July 28, 2006.

Contact CAEE at 303-273-9527 or info@caee.org for more information.

CAEE would also like to thank the volunteer members of the 2005 Awards Committee:

Stacie Gilmore, Chair, Environmental Learning for Kids
Roxanne Brickell-Reardon, Colorado State Parks - Barr Lake
Susan Buhr, Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences, University of Colorado
Wendy Hanophy, Colorado Division of Wildlife
Karla Hostetter, Interpret This
Kristin Libbenton, Bluff Lake Nature Center
Dan Parker
Tim Sandsmark, Lookout Mountain Nature Center, Jefferson County Open Space
Diane Simmons, Colorado Academy
Liz Wickard, City of Aurora Parks and Open Space
Dean Winstanley, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Kathy Zelenka, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

CAEE is grateful to the Woody Johnson Trio for providing the wonderful Bluegrass music.

The Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education wishes to thank Creative Works Catering, Colorado Mountain Club, New Belgium Brewing Company and Colorado State Forest Service for their generous support of the Eighth Annual Awards Celebration.

Special thanks to CH2M HILL for the design and printing of all awards materials.
Wendy MacPhail-Brigham

Wendy MacPhail-Brigham was part of the original group that founded CAEE. In addition to the considerable time she spent helping to develop the initial statewide EE conferences and formulating the organization's direction and by-laws, Wendy also served for several years on CAEE's Board of Directors. She was instrumental in creating solid working relationships between CAEE and local EE networks in the Aspen Valley and Glenwood Springs areas. One of Wendy's more visible contributions is the delightful watercolor adorning the Enos Mills Lifetime Achievement Award perpetual plaque and yearly awards.

For more than 25 years, Wendy MacPhail-Brigham has demonstrated outstanding achievement and commitment to environmental education (EE). Like Enos Mills – a preservationist, photographer, nature guide and adventurer – Wendy works to protect, appreciate and educate about the environment.

Wendy's unique blend of determination and passion combine to make her a natural leader. She served six years on the Board of Trustees at the Aspen Center for Environmental Studies (ACES). She was the EE Director and Coordinator at various schools for 15 years. Over the course of her diverse career, she has presented at numerous EE conferences, both nationally and internationally.

Wendy is a gifted educator. Many of her most important and innovative contributions to the field have been as a steadfast champion for the role of art and expression in EE. Wendy's achievements are testimony to the statement "let nature be the teacher." She was a catalyst for incorporating place-based EE as an official part of Aspen Elementary School's in-school curriculum. Since 1993 every K-4th grade student has attended weekly EE classes taught by Wendy and ACES staff.

Under Wendy’s leadership, the Aspen School District supported the construction of an Earthwise classroom on their campus. From fundraising to building design to the actual construction, Wendy was present every step of the way. Wendy’s commitment to engage the community was the key element helping the classroom become a reality. The building utilizes some of the most widely recognized methods for achieving energy and resource efficiency. Completed in 1999 the classroom provides a permanent home for the elementary EE program.

Wendy's infectious enthusiasm for the environment has touched many. She inspired more than 20 educators, who have gone on to be motivated classroom teachers and EE program directors. Wendy served as an irreplaceable mentor to the ACES education staff for more than 10 years. She also designed and instructed a Nature Journaling and Illustration course through the ACES Naturalist Field School summer program.

Enda Mills Kiley, daughter of Enos Mills and Wendy’s dear friend, had this to say: “She is a people person, respectful and understanding, particularly of all kinds of children. She is an enthusiastic and knowledgeable naturalist. Her teaching can stimulate outdoor interest early in children’s lives when it lays a foundation. She is tireless in expanding her teaching skills so that each child is touched. Wendy MacPhail is an exceptionally skilled person who is an exceptional teacher.”

Dave Sutherland

Dave Sutherland has committed his 20-year-long career to improving environmental education (EE) and interpretation. His programs make people laugh and enjoy nature while presenting important environmental issues. His work in EE and interpretation spans from Yosemite and Galápagos national parks to public schools in the USA, Costa Rica, and Ecuador. Currently, Dave educates and inspires learners and peers at the City of Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP).

Dave is a “one man interpretive shop” whose skills include public speaking in two languages, volunteer and teacher training, interpretive writing, photography, graphic arts and illustration, and web site and slide show design. Dave is also an incredible field naturalist with an astonishing depth and breadth of knowledge about biology, astronomy and geology. He says he has been training for his job since age three; learning and teaching about the natural world has been his passion for as long as he can remember.

Dave’s devotion to the inclusion of Spanish-speakers has had a tremendous positive impact. While working for the Charles Darwin Station in the Galápagos Islands; he noticed that the Galápagos residents had no materials in Spanish about their own islands, and consequently were investing little effort in their conservation. Always one to take initiative, Dave created a work team to produce the first Spanish schoolbook about the islands: Galápagos – Nuestras Islas. The book is still the best Spanish-language primer to the islands. At a time when little outreach to Colorado’s many Spanish speaking students was happening, Dave continued his efforts to reach across cultural boundaries, by organizing local schools and Spanish-speaking teachers. Each year, Dave presents 70-80 educational programs, and over 1/3 of those are in Spanish.

Dave developed the first informational web pages for Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks, and today, he is still the primary architect for the website. A visit reveals Dave’s interpretive fingerprints: the kids’ pages sparkle with humor, the nature pages are loaded with fun information and many of Dave’s own pictures. By elevating the department’s web page to a thing of beauty, Dave found a new way to reach out and help the local community understand the value of its Open Space. The Mountain Parks website received a national award in 1999.

Dave has also shared his expertise with others as a principle trainer for teachers, volunteers and guides throughout his career. As a trainer, Dave’s classes are fun, spontaneous, hands-on and never, ever boring. Dave’s knowledge-based and inspirational style has helped Open Space create a dedicated cadre of volunteers.

Dave is an inspiration to his co-workers and peers and his longstanding dedication and creative contributions to EE are celebrated through the Enos Mills Lifetime Achievement Award.
President’s Award
Amory Lovins, Rocky Mountain Institute

The Board of Directors of the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) is honored to present Amory Lovins with the 2005 President’s Award in recognition of his many years of work to educate businesses and communities about the environment and ways to live sustainably. Amory is the cofounder and CEO of Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI). Located in Old Snowmass, RMI is a 22-year-old, independent, entrepreneurial, nonprofit applied research center. RMI fosters the efficient and restorative use of natural and human capital to create a secure, prosperous, and life-sustaining world. Lovins has been one of the most influential American voices advocating a “soft energy path” for the U.S. and other nations. He has advocated energy-use and energy-production concepts based on conservation, efficiency, the use of renewable sources of energy and generation of energy at or near the site it is used.

Amory Lovins was trained in physics and has worked professionally as an environmentalist. His work focuses on transforming the car, real-estate, electricity, water, semiconductor, and several other sectors of the economy toward advanced resource productivity. In the 1990s, his work with the Rocky Mountain Institute included the design of an ultra-efficient automobile, the “Hypercar.” His books include National Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution (with Paul Hawken and L. Hunter Lovins, 1999) and Small Is Profitable: The Hidden Economic Benefits of Making Electrical Resources the Right Size (RMI, August 2002). Lovins’ most recent publication, Winning the Oil Endgame: Innovations for Profits, Jobs, and Security (RMI, 2004), offers a coherent strategy for ending oil dependence by combining innovative technologies and new business models with uncommon public policies (www.oilendgame.com).

Colorado Urban Wildlife Partnership — All Species Count BioBlitz

The All Species Count BioBlitz is one of the nation’s largest biodiversity education events. The count is a 24-hour citizen-science, biological inventory of all the living organisms within a 20-mile radius of the Colorado State Capital Building. This event involved more than 30 partners in the metro Denver region and resulted in an inventory of nearly 15,500 acres in 2005.

The objectives of the event are to build awareness of urban wildlife habitats among metro area residents; build partnerships between interest groups, scientific experts, and land management agencies; and instill a sense of community and pride around keeping space for wildlife in our communities.

The event’s innovative website, www.allspeciescount.org features an interactive map of partner events, online field guides, real time data collection and results, and curriculum for teachers. In 2004, the event drew over 250 visitors and 500 volunteer counters who identified 635 species. In its second year, the BioBlitz expanded to provide materials for local schools to begin using their learning landscapes for real-world science and math activities, and involved students counting in their schoolyards. Counters doubled to over 1000 and event visitation increased five-fold to over 1000 people!

The event is coordinated by the Colorado Urban Wildlife Partnership and is primarily funded through the Colorado Division of Wildlife. The National Wildlife Federation also supports the event by helping develop the website and sharing the online field guide at www.energytrust.org. For 2006, the event moves to June 23 and will engage more scientific experts and families. The education focus will move to the week of Earthday, April 22, 2006. You can join the 2006 All Species Count by registering your site, school, neighborhood park, or backyard!
Government Award
City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks — Volunteer Naturalist Program

Volunteer Naturalists for the City of Boulder’s Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) Department are dedicated citizens who participate in a rigorous 11-week training led by OSMP staff and local experts. In return, the volunteers serve a critical role providing hundreds of customized environmental education and interpretation programs to people of all ages.

The Volunteer Naturalist Program stands out because of its high caliber and comprehensive aspects, including selective recruitment, intensive core training, and on-going advanced trainings throughout the year. The success of the program is demonstrated by the increased number of programs that volunteers deliver each year. In 2005, 169 programs were provided, an increase of 134 programs from 2003.

The volunteers lend a wide variety of specialties and experiences to OSMP’s program. For example in 2005, the Volunteer Naturalist Program recruited a Spanish-speaking volunteer who has nearly doubled the capacity to provide such programs.

Volunteers mention specifically that they enjoy the training, the chance to work with OSMP staff and to give back to the rest of the community. One volunteer wrote, “I have a much better appreciation of the stewardship which OSMP provides our open space assets and the dedication of OSMP staff to provide a great experience for the community and to sustain an environment in which people, animals, and plants can not only survive — but coexist and flourish.”

It is difficult to measure the value of increasing peoples’ connections to nature. The promotion of stewardship is a critical element to respecting remaining wild places. With more than 5 million visits to OSMP lands each year, the volunteer naturalist program plays a significant role in instilling a sense of wonder and responsibility in the surrounding communities. The Volunteer Naturalists are making a profound difference in environmental literacy, and OSMP is immensely grateful for their hard work and heartfelt investments.

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Media Award
etown

Founded in 1991, etown is a nationally-syndicated radio show heard every week on more than 200 stations. etown’s mission is to produce high quality programs of diverse music and conversation in order to educate, entertain, and engage a wide audience in appreciating and protecting cultural and natural resources. Every show features live performances from top musical artists, thought-provoking interviews and the presentation of the e-chievement award recognizing everyday people making a difference in their community or environment. Nick Forster, of the legendary bluegrass band Hot Rize, and his wife, singer/actress Helen Forster, are the founders, creators, and hosts of the show.

The listener nominated e-chievement award highlights individuals making a positive difference in their communities and beyond. From massive river clean-ups to programs for the homeless, from neighborhood activists to national social and environmental organizations, etown celebrates and shares the stories of ordinary citizens accomplishing extraordinary things.

Hundreds of e-chievement award winners have reported direct, tangible results from etown exposure, including: increased funding, more volunteers/in-kind contributions, and additional local/national press.

Comments from e-chievement award winners:

“We’ve gotten a great response... several donors mentioned that they heard about us on etown. Plus we got inquiries from around the country asking, ‘How do we start one of these in our area?’ “
Winner Oso, Founder of FreeGeek, a non-profit group refurbishing discarded computers to give to the needy (saving tons of toxic waste from landfills while creating community).

“We had calls and emails pour in... We experienced a 400% increase in traffic to our website and many new donors and supporters emerged from that group... we’ve raised thousands of dollars for programming from etown listeners.”
Winner David Wish, Founder of Little Kids Rock: an organization providing free instruments and music lessons to poor and at-risk students.

etown
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Participant Comments
From a parent:
“I have to tell you that when none of her friends signed up to go, she didn’t want to go either. I sort of twisted her arm into going… the good news is that when she got in the car Monday after her first day, the first things she said to me was: ‘I hate it when you’re right!’ She had a fantastic time… enjoyed the whole week… even did the climbing wall, which she was adamant she would not do!

“Thank you for a great week! I feel like I’ve made some new friends and I really feel better about myself.”
– 8th grader

Best New Program Award
Mountain Park Environmental Center — Mountain Pathways for Young Women

Mountain Pathways for Young Women is a weeklong day camp designed to empower girls entering seventh through ninth grades via immersion in the natural world. Nature awareness activities, hiking, journaling, low and high challenge course, and facilitated discussions offer participating girls opportunities to explore, in a safe and supportive environment, some of the many choices and issues confronting them as they transition into high school. Issues include body image, leadership skills, substance abuse education, career choices, healthy relationships, self-esteem, and self-care (including pregnancy prevention).

Unique Components of “Pathways”
• Combines environmental education (EE) with prevention education (substance abuse, violence, pregnancy), including introduction to life-long physical activities such as hiking, ecosystem study, and horseback riding.
• Outdoor-based, women-only program allows young women the opportunity to explore and question preconceived images, roles, and abilities in a safe, supportive environment.
• Outcomes of pre- and post-tests indicate that participants experience statistically significant improvements in self-esteem and attitudes towards nature.

“Pathways” Partners
• School District 60: Program design support, funding
• CSU Pueblo Experiential Learning Center: Ropes course and climbing wall
• Bear Basin Ranch: Low ropes, horseback riding

The Mountain Park Environmental Center is a non-profit 501(c)3 EE organization. Located in the Pueblo Mountain Park near Beulah, 25 miles west of Pueblo, MPEC’s mission is to provide EE programming in order to create a citizenry that understands, respects, enjoys, and cares for themselves, their families, and the natural world. MPEC offers a variety of educational programming, including guided hikes, school programs, workshops, summer camps, and evening nature talks.

Agriculture Award
Colorado Association of Conservation Districts — Conservation Education Program

The Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) has two major environmental education programs involving young people. Camp Rocky is a weeklong experience for 14 through 19 year olds who enjoy the outdoors and are interested in natural resources. The staff are dedicated resource professionals who present four different resource fields from which the participants may choose one. These areas are Forest Management, Rangeland Science, Soil and Water Conservation, and Fish and Wildlife Management. Students from the different resource teams work on developing integrated plans while using critical thinking and problem solving techniques to resolve controversial environmental problems.

A second education program involves a Conservation Poster Contest for 4th through 6th grade students. Each student submits a poster designed around an annual theme. The local conservation district selects two posters from students in their district to enter a state level contest. The winner of the state contest is submitted to national judging. Each year between 4,000 and 5,000 Colorado students enter the contest. In two of the past six years, a Colorado student has won either a first or second honor in the national judging of their age group.

To round out the educational programs of CACD, a Teacher’s Conservation Workshop has been offered each summer since 1982. CACD has also participated in the national Conservation Teacher of the Year Program since its establishment in 1974. In that time, six teachers from Colorado have been selected as the National Conservation Teacher of the Year.
Colorado Mountain Club — Youth Education Program (YEP!)

The Colorado Mountain Club’s Youth Education Program (YEP!) sparks personal growth, academic achievement, and environmental ethics in youth through mountain recreation, art, science, and literacy education. YEP! uses a theme unique to Colorado — the mountains — for multiple class options with experiential activities and holistic teaching methodology. YEP! provides environmental learning opportunities for many children who otherwise could not experience mountain topics, let alone meet the mountains first hand.

Since its inception in 1999, the program has received rave reviews from 29,000 youth, teachers, and group leaders in the Denver Metro Area. YEP! “brings the mountains” to students through in-school activities and field trips that are aligned with Colorado Model Content Standards.

The program offers flexibility according to the needs and schedules of school and youth groups with classes offered at the American Mountaineering Center in Golden (in their lab, conference center, climbing wall, and along the Clear Creek trail), in school classrooms, at local open space parks, and in the mountains.

Activities are designed to instill a desire for life-long learning, exploration, and stewardship of the mountains. More than ten classes make science, math, and art topics exciting and relevant to student’s lives, including: Mountain Weather, Avalanche Science, the Biology, Geology and Physics of Rock Climbing, Physiology with an Altitude, Conserve Our Mountains, Conserve Our Neighborhoods, Orienteering, and other topics by request.

One of the goals of the Youth Education Program is to enrich the lives of youth by teaching responsible outdoor recreation that includes adventure, challenge, and stewardship. Evaluations and observations demonstrate that the activities encourage students to feel proud of their achievements, teach them leadership and initiative skills, and increase their physical activity and self-confidence levels. Teachers report that YEP!’s unique science and art activities aid in meeting educational benchmarks in science, math, and art.

YEP! seeks on-going partnerships with schools and youth groups each year, to provide progressive learning through the topic areas. Rich partnerships have been cultivated with Shelton Elementary School’s after-school Alpine Club, The Rocky Mountain Deaf School, Baker Middle School, The American Lung Association Champ Camp, and Girls, Inc.

For More Information:
Colorado Mountain Club
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PreK-12 Award
Denver Museum of Nature & Science and Balarat Outdoor Education Center — WEBS Program

The WEBS program is a collaboration between the Denver Museum of Nature and Science and the Balarat Outdoor Education Center for Denver Public Schools (DPS). Third grade students from DPS participate in the all day program. For one half of the day, learners take an interpretive hike at Genesee Mountain Park and during the other half of the day the class is engaged at the Museum. Two classes experience WEBS each week.

The Balarat Outdoor Education Center was established in 1969 and is located on 700 acres of forestland in Jamestown. It provides instruction to DPS students in environmental studies, Western history, and outdoor leadership skills. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science, founded in 1900, houses collections of more than 765,000 objects in the cultural and natural sciences. During the last school year, the education programs reached more than 340,000 students.

Children see the bison and elk herds that reside in Genesee Park; they hike and learn about maintaining a natural place while seeing, smelling, and touching many wildflowers, trees, and rocks. They search for tracks, listen for sounds, experience a dry, south-facing slope and compare it to a wet, mossy slope on the opposite side of the trail. In the Museum they hold and manipulate bones, skulls, hides, feathers, scat, and plants that represent the animals and plants of the Denver area and of the foothills ecosystem. With an experienced volunteer, the students tour the Museum exhibit Edge of the Wild.

Participation in the WEBS program often marks the first time young students have ventured to the outdoors with the idea of learning about the natural world. Teachers and volunteers address the balance of nature and begin to introduce scientific literacy by comparing the urban environment of Denver with a natural one; a goal of equal importance is to stimulate wonder and curiosity. By helping students connect with nature, WEBS builds respect and responsibility for the environment.

For More Information:
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Government Award

Jefferson County Open Space — Junior Ranger Program

The Jefferson County Open Space program evolved in 1972 when the people of Jefferson County seized the opportunity to implement a one-half of one percent tax on sales to fund planning, acquisition, and maintenance of lands and waters for the enjoyment of current and future generations. In recent years, Jefferson County Open Space has expanded its recreation, education, and interpretive programming significantly and has become a provider of award winning park-based educational programs. The Junior Ranger program is no exception.

Begun in 2003 as a simple, self-guided educational program for youth, the Junior Ranger program has grown into a multi-day summer program serving individuals, families, community groups, and civic organizations. Like many Junior Ranger programs, the Jefferson County Open Space Junior Ranger Discovery Guide encourages participants to care for park resources, maintain their outdoor safety skills, and to leave as few human impacts on Open Space as possible. Many aspects of the Junior Ranger program are unique, including the Junior Ranger Discovery Days.

Jeffco’s Junior Ranger Discovery Days utilize a hands-on approach where participants work directly with Open Space staff and volunteers to complete guided nature activities, practice outdoor safety skills, and understand basic stewardship concepts. During Discovery Days junior rangers build their own beaver dams, discover aquatic insects, and become ponderosa pine trees.

Since its inception in 2004, Junior Ranger Discovery Days has served more than 1,000 youth in 12 Discovery Days programs based at Pine Valley Ranch Park. Additionally, volunteers from the Open Space Park Patroller program, the Lookout Mountain Nature Center, and the Park Host program have contributed over 400 hours of service to Discovery Days. In 2005, the program was expanded to include Junior Fire Rangers with the addition of a fire-based discovery guide discussing basic fire ecology, plant adaptations, and wildfire prevention.

In 2006, the program will launch a series of new discovery stations, as well as an inclusive discovery guide discussing basic fire ecology, plant adaptations, and wildfire prevention. The program was expanded to include Junior Fire Rangers with the addition of a fire-based discovery guide discussing basic fire ecology, plant adaptations, and wildfire prevention.

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