environmental education is setting the new standard for learning.

CAEE

2011 awards for excellence in environmental education
Environmental educators across Colorado are making a difference in their communities. Through service learning, civic engagement, and encounters with the natural world, environmental education helps learners understand their role in the environment. Since 1996 the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) has taken the opportunity to honor the amazing work and efforts of environmental educators and organizations across the state through the Awards for Excellence in Environmental Education Program.

**president's award**

Each year the CAEE Board of Directors selects an individual or organization to receive the CAEE President’s Award in honor of exceptional leadership for environmental preservation, sustainability, and education.

**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 an individual for long-term, outstanding achievements and contributions to environmental education. Enos Mills spent his life discovering and experiencing nature, and working tirelessly to preserve it by sharing its benefits with others through nature guiding, writing, and photography. Like Enos Mills, the award recipient has demonstrated leadership and commitment to the field of environmental education through a significant body of work. Past recipients include:

- Georg Ek, 1995
- George A. “Buddy” Wilson, 1996
- Glen A. Hinshaw, 1997
- CeCe Forget, 1998
- Enda Mills Kiley, 1998
- Roxanne Brickell-Reardon, 1999
- Elizabeth Gardener, 2000
- Oakleigh Thorne II, 2001
- Mary Ann Bonnell, 2002
- Shawna Crocker, 2003
- Mike Way, 2004
- Wendy MacPhail-Brigham, 2005
- Dave Sutherland, 2005
- Wendy Hanophy, 2006
- Raymond Tschillard, 2007
- Dave Van Manen, 2008
- Patrick Emery, 2009
- Lisa Evans, 2009
- George Wallace, 2010

**award for outstanding retiring environmental educators**

Do you know an outstanding environmental educator who has retired (or is retiring) from their professional role in education, and whose contributions to the field of environmental education deserve recognition? Are you such an educator? If so, please nominate him/her - or yourself - for the Recognition for Outstanding Retired Environmental Educators! To be considered for this award, the nominee must have been an environmental educator (at any grade level, formal or non-formal, volunteer) for at least five years, plan to retire within one year or be three years or less beyond retirement, and have made a significant contribution to environmental education during his/her career. Nominations are accepted on the first of May and October each year.

**environmental education program awards**

Initiated in 1996, CAEE Environmental Education Program Awards honor leadership in developing effective, cooperative, cross-sector environmental education programs. The 2011 recipients have demonstrated success in implementing innovative environmental education programs and partnerships.

Please visit the displays to learn more about these outstanding programs and educators.
The Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education wishes to thank the Colorado State Forest Service, WhiteWave, Frederic Printing, and Suncor Energy for their generous support of the Fourteenth Annual Awards Celebration.

With sincere gratitude, CAEE thanks Kate Peabody for her extraordinary in-kind contribution of designing the 2011 Awards Program booklet. This is actually Kate’s fourth year designing this prized component of CAEE’s Award Program! As CH2M HILL Communications Strategist, Kate lends her environmental enthusiasm to communications, public outreach, and education in the water and engineering sector to help shape and improve our global community for generations to come. Kate is a true believer and actor in effecting positive and sustainable development through innovative businesses and business solutions. She earned bachelor’s degrees in Communications and Graphic Design and an MBA in Environmental Policy and Management.

CAEE wants to thank the volunteer members of the 2011 Awards Committee:
- Kristin Libberton, Chair, City of Boulder-Keep It Clean Partnership
- Roxanne Brickell-Readon, Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education
- Pam Collins, Windsong Environmental Education Foundation
- Karin Hostetter, Interpret This
- Ashley Millman, Lookout Mountain Nature Center, Jefferson County Open Space
- Sharon Moore, CSU Extension Jefferson County
- Kathleen Okon
- Mark Platten, CSU Extension Teller County
- Emily Perkins
- Amanda Peterson, Lookout Mountain Nature Center, Jefferson County Open Space
- Jenn Rieskamp, Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education
- Tim Sandsmark, Lookout Mountain Nature Center, Jefferson County Open Space
- Kim Weiss, Environmental Learning for Kids
- Liz Wickard, City of Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space

Do you know of a successful environmental education program in a school, business, public agency, nonprofit, 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!

Visit www.caee.org to learn more and download a nomination form.

Contact CAEE at 303-273-9527 or info@caee.org for more information.
CAEE’s Board of Directors is proud to honor Dean Winstanley with the 2011 President’s Award in recognition of his exceptional leadership and ongoing support for environmental education (EE) during his 20-year career with Colorado State Parks. During these years and through a variety of roles, Dean demonstrated a commitment to maintaining and strengthening the field of EE in Colorado. He has used his knowledge and influence to defend and create new avenues to promote EE. Faye Koeltzow, who had the pleasure of working with Dean for 20 years at State Parks, shares, “I learned early on that Dean has an unparalleled passion for and knowledge about Colorado’s amazing natural resources. More importantly, Dean understands and embraces the value of educating and encouraging others to observe, explore, and grow in the outdoor world so they, too, can become advocates and future stewards of our precious lands.”

To gain more experience and involvement in the field of EE, Dean served as a member of the CAEE’s Board of Directors from 1999-2005 and as a member of CAEE’s Awards Committee from 2000-03. During this time of meeting and interacting with numerous EE professionals, Dean gained more understanding of and a greater respect for environmental educators and their efforts. These experiences influenced many of Dean’s decisions about supporting and endorsing interpretation and EE in 42 State Parks. Dean ensured access to high-quality and effective training for full-time and seasonal staff, as well as State Park volunteers. He made it a priority to place appropriate and helpful resources in all the parks. When Dean became the Director of Colorado State Parks in 2007, he remembered and valued EE and environmental educators. Amidst unprecedented State Parks budget cuts, Dean continued to fight for interpretive and EE program funding and to emphasize these crucial program efforts at all the parks.

Throughout his career, Dean has demonstrated through leadership and by example his complete understanding of EE and its importance in formal and informal educational settings. Most recently, he has bridged efforts to advance EE within the kids outdoors movement in Colorado. He served on the Colorado Kids Outdoors Leadership Council working to build an understanding of the importance of time spent outdoors experiencing and learning about nature. As State Parks Director, Dean was involved in the development of the state’s Environmental Literacy Plan as one of the key players needed to support, champion, and implement the plan. Adoption of the Environmental Literacy Plan by the Colorado State Board of Education will impact 800,000 learners across the state and CAEE was asked to play a lead role in its development.

In addition to his work in state government, Dean authored *The Colorado Guide*, a very successful comprehensive guide to Colorado emphasizing useful information about ways to connect with and learn about our state’s magnificent outdoor resources. Dean’s tenure as Director of Colorado State Parks ended June 30, 2011, when State Parks and the Division of Wildlife merged into one organization: Colorado Parks & Wildlife. In his personal and professional life, Dean continues providing leadership to connect people of all ages to Colorado’s magnificent outdoors. He lives in Denver with his wife, Sheila, and two teenage kids.

“Throughout his career at Colorado State Parks, Dean recognized the critical importance of engaging park visitors in the stewardship of our invaluable parklands. Even during the toughest of economic times Dean faced when he was Director, he found ways to make resources available for environmental education.” - Tom Easley, former Director of Statewide Programs at Colorado State Parks

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1 Published in 1989 and updated through six editions by Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado.
Each summer, The Greenway Foundation employs 10-15 Denver youth as River Rangers. This diverse group of high school and college students spends the summer learning what it means to be an environmental educator and a steward of the environment through their work along the South Platte River and its tributaries. The program encompasses a wide array of experiences to build the knowledge and skills these youth need to pursue careers in the environmental field. The River Rangers participate in a series of 10, two-hour workshops highlighting the different components of environmental education. Youth integrate what is learned during these workshops and apply it on the job while leading day trips with elementary students and youth summer camps, implementing park improvement projects, and conducting historic public boat tours on the Cherry Creek. The River Rangers ultimately compile a portfolio, demonstrating their knowledge and skills, for submission to the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) with the goal of earning a credential as a Certificated Environmental Educator in Colorado.

The River Ranger program replaced the Greenway Foundation’s previous employment program in 2010 to address several needs and goals. The demographics of the professionals working in environmental education, natural resource, and related fields are not representative of Colorado’s population. The long-term preservation of our natural resources depends on our ability to engage these underrepresented youth as leaders, stewards, and role models for their communities through pursuing degrees and careers in these fields. A major obstacle for these youth is a lack of core knowledge and basic skills enabling them to compete for entry-level jobs. This program aims to close these gaps while exposing youth to inclusive experiences and opportunities many of them never knew existed. River Ranger, Kay Caranta, shares, “My experience as a River Ranger overall was really great because it set me on a career path that I had no idea I had interest in. It gave me the skills and motivation to have an environmental career later on in life.” Throughout the summer, The Greenway Foundation invites several professionals to speak with the youth about opportunities in green jobs and other environmental career paths.

In addition to exposing these youth to environmental careers, the River Rangers develop their environmental literacy. They learn how to identify native plants and animals, investigate environmental issues, and form a personal connection with nature right in the heart of the city. This program is strengthened by several partnerships, including Denver Parks and Recreation, CAEE, Overland Pond Stewardship Partners, Groundwork Denver, and Summer Scholars.

“Being a River Ranger for me has been a lot of growing up… I learned how to interact with kids, I learned that I am a teacher, and I learned a lot of new things about myself.” – Mobert Habimfura, River Ranger

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agriculture award
farmhands education program

The Farmhands Education Program is a cornerstone project of Guidestone, a 501(c)3, nonprofit organization, located in Salida, Colorado. Guidestone serves farmers, educators, youth, and community members in the Upper Arkansas Valley by providing educational programs and strengthening the local food economy through the preservation of agricultural resources and education for ecological literacy. Farmhands was born through a natural process by members of a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm program asking if their children could come and learn about animals and gardening with the farmers. These opportunities quickly developed into summer Farm Camps, classes with school children, and much more.

Farmhands currently provides hands-on, experiential farm, and nature-based educational opportunities to school groups, special contract groups, children, and families with a curricular focus on nature appreciation, ecological understanding, traditional arts, sustainable agriculture, and human health and nutrition. Farmhands staff and volunteers employ approaches ensuring every person, regardless of ability and background, can meaningfully and wholly participate in all programs. Some measures used to meet individual needs include having buddies, parent involvement, and adequate staff. Farmhands programs are offered at two unique teaching sites in Chaffee County: 1) in Buena Vista on the Cottonwood Meadows property in partnership with Weathervane Farm CSA; Cottonwood Creek Dairy; and Colorado Grown; and 2) in Salida at the historic Hutchinson Homestead – a seventh-generation working ranch – in partnership with Salida Parks, Open Space and Trails; Town of Poncha Springs; and the Hutchinson Family.

Historically, ranching and agriculture were at the heart of the community’s identity and economics, but today a majority of the region’s children and families are distanced from a daily connection to an agrarian lifestyle. In light of this disconnect, a strong sense of place flows through Farmhands’ entire curriculum creating hands-on experiences for students to explore and understand this heritage and how these life skills and connections to food and place are still immediate, valuable, and fun! Students can practice traditional skills that were once a necessity (butter making, spinning, soap making), assist with farm chores (planting, harvesting, milking a cow, gathering eggs), help with ranch projects (irrigating fields, fixing fences), and eat freshly harvested veggies from the garden. These experiences on a real working farm and ranch are unique and invaluable, especially for children. They learn and play, explore and discover, taste, touch, and smell... all while being active outdoors. All these learning opportunities combine to foster a unique connection to place, community, and self. In the long-term, it is Farmhands’ goal that these experiences and connections will plant the seeds and develop roots to help grow informed and environmentally responsible adults.

“While on a Farmhands field trip, one Boys & Girls Club student was asked to assist as keeper of the egg basket and fence mover for the tractor to pass by. ‘I feel so important,’ the young man told the staff after he got back on the trailer. For days, this member beamed with pride and a sense of usefulness.” - Brett Haydin, Executive Director, B&GC of Chaffee County

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For 15 years, Denver Youth Naturally (DYN) has successfully been igniting curiosity and inspiring youth in their academic studies and career choices, as well as in outdoor recreation. DYN has several effective recruitment tools for youth to get involved with the program. Youth are recruited through science education classes, after-school programs, community festivals, and word-of-mouth. DYN serves youth ages eight-eighteen, through multi-year learning experiences, which provide well-rounded youth development and educational programs. The DYN philosophy is that through increased and consistent time in nature, youth will develop a better understanding of the natural environment and a deeper connection to nature. The overall benefits to youth also include improved health, both physically and mentally and the development of a stewardship ethic.

DYN has a proven track record of providing both classroom and outdoor experiential field activities for 80 youth from Adams, Arapahoe, and Denver counties each year. DYN staff are currently working with 22 public schools in the Denver-metro area, including seven elementary schools, 10 middle schools, and five high schools. The demographics of DYN’s constituency are: 50% African-American, 45% Latino, and 5% White and/or Asian. By engaging these underserved youth, DYN works as a catalyst breaking down generational cycles of poverty. Youth involved in DYN have a 98% graduation rate from high school. Currently, there are 13 DYN students enrolled in college full-time, with eight of them studying in a science related field. An overall goal of DYN is to diversify the natural resource and environmental education fields by creating a strong pipeline for youth to pursue degrees and careers in these fields.

The impact on youth involved with DYN is life-long. More than 95% of them come back year, after year. From hiking on ancient tribal lands with an elder to a night hike lit by a full moon, DYN youth actively learn about science and have experiences they will remember for a lifetime. DYN builds a community of learners that becomes a strong support network for these youth, similar to that of a family. By engaging students at an elementary school age, watching them grow, and facilitating them getting into college, DYN has been successful in empowering youth to fully develop their potential. DYN is a model program engaging youth long-term and providing important educational and self-sufficiency skill development ensuring they become productive citizens.

DYN relies heavily on numerous and diverse partnerships and is a core program of the Environmental Learning for Kids organization. Partners include many city, county, state, and federal agencies; local and national nonprofit organizations; and school districts. These compelling partnerships increase DYN’s effectiveness for the youth they serve.

“To me DYN means a whole lot! DYN has helped me so much with getting scholarships and striving for success. It is because of DYN I got the opportunity to go to so many places that I never would have imagined. I’ve had so many awesome experiences and made friendships with such amazing people and I am so thankful I joined DYN.” - Christian Gonzalez, DYN youth for nine years.

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Girl Scout Water Badge Day is a unique program designed for girls to expand their appreciation for water while completing fun and creative activities. The annual event is an opportunity for Brownie and Girl Scouts ages five-sixteen to visit Aurora Reservoir and complete the requirements for their water-related badges. The successful collaboration of the City of Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) and Aurora Water Department with the Girl Scouts of Colorado provides the crucial elements that make this program possible. About 50 scouts attend the program each year and in 2011 a record 60 girls participated.

Girl Scout Troop leaders are always looking for creative and inexpensive ways to enrich their troop's experiences. In response, City of Aurora naturalists and Aurora Water educators provide a highly efficient program using successful ideas from Girl Scout literature, nationally published Project WET curriculum, agency education staff, and a visit to Aurora Reservoir. Badge Day enables girls to meet their Girl Scout award requirements through a dynamic, interactive, and memorable educational experience.

Badge Day stands out because it is resourceful and inclusive and goes beyond a one-day learning experience. Girl Scouts from all over Aurora, one of the most diverse communities along the Front Range, participate. Each year sees an influx of girls from many races, cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, and learning abilities. Scouts learn about the importance of water in their lives, participate in a trash cleanup at the reservoir, and receive information to schedule a storm drain stenciling project or a tour of a purification facility. These opportunities encourage girls to continue thinking about the value of water and to act in ways to help conserve and keep it clean, both now and in the future.

Badge Day provides memorable experiences for girls while conveying important facts about water and local watersheds. One Girl Scout shares, “I think learning about water is important because water is most of the earth and we should take care of it.” Educators strive to provide scouts with accurate information that helps them think about daily water use. Upon completion, scouts receive a conservation kit, an activity booklet, and information to join the Aurora Water Kids Club to continue receiving the conservation message. All of these components reinforce content from the event, and encourage scouts to find different ways to conserve water. Girl Scouts in Aurora benefit from a truly synergistic partnership with Aurora PROS Department, Aurora Water, and the Girl Scouts of Colorado. The Aurora Naturalist Program is funded in part by Arapahoe County Open Space, Adams County Open Space, and the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District.

“Thank you for doing this workshop, it really engaged the girls and they learned a lot. It is great to have a hands-on workshop for the girls to earn a badge.” - Girl Scout leader

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Many people are unfamiliar with the public lands in their own backyard. In northwest Colorado, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages many of these “backyard” lands. The Bioregion in Your Backyard Program was developed to encourage local students to learn about their public lands and bioregion so they may become life-long stewards of the land. The Bioregion program provides students in rural Moffat County, near Craig, Colorado, an opportunity to connect with local natural surroundings on BLM land. Funded through a multi-year grant from the BLM, the Bioregion program is implemented by Yampatika, a local, nonprofit organization inspiring environmental stewardship through education.

The Bioregion in Your Backyard Program, now in its fifth year, provides hands-on, place-based educational experiences for sixth-grade students from Craig at Cedar Mountain. The participating schools’ staff selected the sixth-grade level because these students do not participate in any other science-based field trips. The Bioregion program enhances and complements the sixth-grade curriculum using place-based inquiry and focusing on ecosystems and biomes. Kathy Hollingsworth, a participating teacher, shares, “Your explanations, along with class discussion and classroom reading helped enforce a greater understanding of our sixth-grade science curriculum.”

In 2011, 240 sixth-grade students learned about their local bioregion at Cedar Mountain by participating in four programs highlighting the diversity of the Cedar Mountain bioregion. The four program rotations include plants, animals, birds, and geology. The programs, developed and presented by partnering organizations, vary in content and include activities such as identifying, journaling, collecting, hiking, teamwork, and role-playing. Partner organizations include Yampatika, BLM, and Colorado Parks & Wildlife (formerly the Colorado Division of Wildlife). Through this program students have an opportunity to explore the ecology and biodiversity of their own “backyard” and integrate this knowledge into their future decision making.

The students also gain insight and perspective of human involvement with the natural world. BLM staff introduce students to public lands and land management through a dilemma exercise reflecting many challenging and realistic land-use perspectives. Groups of students use their problem-solving skills and create a management plan based on their assigned land user groups (i.e., bird watchers, all terrain vehicle (ATV) users, hunters, hikers, others). Students present a management plan based on their perspectives in a mock public meeting. The dilemma curriculum, designed by Yampatika, complements the field trip day and offers additional activities for ongoing education in the classroom.

“A great way to learn about resources, stewardship, agencies, and diversity of life that makes this a great area.” - Kenneth Olinger, participating teacher

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contact: Gina Robison * Little Snake Field Office of BLM * 455 Emerson Street * Craig, CO 81625 * 970.826.5083 * Gina_Robison@blm.gov
The Wings of Wonder Program, started in 2008, is provided by Wild Wings Environmental Education (WWEE), which brings live animals into classrooms and other settings with the goal of creating and maintaining an awareness of their role in the environment. In particular, some of Colorado’s native birds and bats are the focus of these 60-minute programs. Live birds, visual aids, and hands-on activities provide an interactive and fun way for participants to learn about the critical functions these animals play in keeping the environment in balance.

Wings of Wonder reaches out to diverse audiences in a multitude of settings, including schools, scout groups, nature centers, state parks, conferences, community fairs and events, and more. By reaching out to large audiences, Wings of Wonder is inspiring people of all ages to gain a new appreciation for the wonders of the great outdoors. Audiences get excited by experiencing wildlife first-hand and through seeing live birds that are often flown in a flight demonstration.

A unique aspect of the program is the involvement and hands-on opportunities for participants, such as winged animal role-playing, raptor-human eyesight comparisons, and simulating an owl’s triangulation capability and hearing activities. Many interesting facts are shared during presentations, including how bats are excellent insect controllers and why hawks are daytime pest controllers while owls patrol the night. In addition, crows and ravens are described by their multifunctional roles as insect and pest controllers, seed dispersers, and scavengers. The audience gains a sense of personal involvement in the environment through a look at mankind’s beneficial and adverse impacts on the wild world.

The messages and knowledge audiences take away from a Wings of Wonder program reaches beyond the limited focus of the natural environment. Experiencing examples of environmental cause and effect (i.e., visualizing impacts of removing top predators from food chains) allows participants to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the relationships of all living things, including themselves. With this knowledge, a seed for caring and participating in the world is planted and grows as it is carried forward into future generations.

The Wings of Wonder Program is made possible through the dedication of WWEE volunteers and relies on the efforts of trained personnel to help present various live animals in multiple settings. The primary partners include local school teachers and nature centers. They are critical partners in supporting and spreading the message of the importance of these animals in the environment.

“The presentation was given to families and all ages were able to walk away with a fabulous experience and new information. Deanna did a great job engaging everyone. The props (bat costume) and out-of-your-seat participation kept the kids involved and interested. They learned fun facts about raptor adaptations and behaviors, as well as how the raptors benefit the ecosystem.”

- Ember Brignull, Open Space Coordinator, City of Louisville
Known as an “Oasis on the Plains,” Fountain Creek Nature Center, in Fountain, Colorado, is a premier location for introducing students and all learners to the wonders of wetlands. The nature center is situated on a terrace overlooking the Fountain Creek floodplain. During the Discover the Wetlands Program, the ecological communities of creek, woodland, meadow, marsh, and pond are explored by third-fifth grade students. Students learn about living organisms and how they interact with one another; they learn how humans can negatively affect our water through pollution and ways to prevent pollution. The program also provides opportunities for students to gain interest in science through direct experience and interactive activities, often on their first-ever hike outdoors!

This program offers access to riparian ecosystems not available anywhere else in El Paso County, making it unique and crucial to science teachers and students in an otherwise dry, semi-arid climate. The program, correlated to state science standards, consists of a slide show, wetland metaphor activity, exhibit room discovery, and guided hike with a pond study component. The metaphor activity requires students to use abstract thinking and everyday objects to explore the many ecosystem services that wetlands provide. Teachers and students especially love the pond study component. Each morning, staff collects pond water samples stirring up mud to capture damselfly and dragonfly nymphs, water beetles, planarian, crawdads, and leeches, just to name a few macro-invertebrates for the big pot of “Pond Soup.” During the hike, students ladle water into trays exploring the hidden life in the pond using magnifying glasses and pond viewers. This is one of the many exciting “ah-ha” moments for students and parents!

The program, developed in the 1990s, fulfills an El Paso County Parks policy goal: “To promote public awareness and understanding of, appreciation for, and interest in the park’s biological and historical resources.” Per request of the El Paso County Stormwater Department and county Recreation and Cultural Services Manager, the program was revised in 2010 incorporating a waterways and pollution component to educate individuals about ways to improve water quality and help control pollution. The revised program has proven to be very successful. In the last three years, this two-hour program has served 6,346 participants from diverse economic populations in the County. One of the biggest lessons participants gain is how important clean water is to a healthy environment and what they can do to help keep the water clean. The program is made possible through its sponsors: Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers, El Paso County Stormwater Department, Kohl’s Department Stores, and REI.

“The water observation with all the creatures, and the fun of hunting for the tiny things, continues into our classroom when we study our ecosystem and the water cycle. The staff and volunteers at Fountain Creek really bring the place alive!” - Susan Garsoe, Teacher

Students engage in macro-invertebrate exploration. Organisms from the “Pond Soup” are easy to identify using magnified pond viewers.
The Earth Task Force is a Cottonwood Institute supported environmental club at New Vista High School (NVHS), a public school, in Boulder, Colorado. A small group of students decided they wanted to do more at NVHS after participating in another Cottonwood Institute course, the Community Adventure Program (CAP), which is the first class of its kind for academic credit through Boulder Valley School District. Involvement in CAP teaches students the skills needed to design and implement an action project around an issue. These students approached their CAP teacher in 2008 about starting a new club, the Earth Task Force (ETF). Beginning with just two highly motivated students and their teacher, ETF, now in its fourth year, boasts 24 active members with three teachers/mentors.

ETF focuses on fun ways to reduce NVHS’s environmental footprint. ETF’s Mission Statement is, “We are determined SUPERHEROES (Students Understanding Personal Environmental Responsibility by Helping Educate and by Restoring Our Ecosystem through Sustainability). We are simple solutions to severe problems. We are excitement and enthusiasm for changing the world. We are a group of students and teachers who approach environmental problems in unconventional, fun, and creative ways.”

A unique aspect of ETF is that it came into existence because of student demand and staff passion. Student involvement, leadership, and coordination are key components to the successes of the club. These motivated teenagers meet twice a week for two-three hours to plan sustainability initiatives with their adult mentors. The unique, replicable, and innovative part of ETF is students and staff working in concert as catalysts towards creating a sustainable school. Students sign up for ETF on a quarterly basis and usually sign up for multiple quarters. They earn credit for their hours of volunteer work.

Because the environmental initiatives at NVHS are fun, creative, and accessible to all students, they spread like wildfire throughout classes, assemblies, hallway discussions, facilities, lunches, and the curriculum. ETF members dress as SUPERHEROES while making announcements at school assemblies or serving a free locally sourced lunch to staff and students at their school. Members clean creeks, dress up as fossil fuels to educate about climate change, run recycling relay races, and participate in two wilderness retreats each year to continue brainstorming, planning, and reflecting for the future.

Most projects that ETF works on require partnering with a community organization or business. The club has worked closely with the Alliance for Climate Education, The Keep it Clean Partnership, The Kitchen Restaurant, Flatirons Neighborhood Farm, The Boulder Valley School District Office of Sustainability, and others. These community experts teach students communication and coordination skills and help them gain real world experience.

“Everyone and everything depends on this planet. I think it’s important to not only make my life more sustainable, but also to influence the people in my local community. This isn’t changing the whole world, but if I make one person notice their personal responsibility then it’s more than worth it.” - Earth Task Force Member
The Estes Valley Environmental Science and Research Program is a full-blown, articulated environmental science and research program for students in grades three-twelve in Estes Park, Colorado. The Park School District R-3 has as its end results for students the acquisition of essential knowledge, application, participation, and skills to become responsible citizens. Environmental literacy is included in these ends. The district places a heavy emphasis on preparing its students for the 21st century with a special focus on encouraging students to explore and enter the STEM fields. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and is a key portion of the public education agenda across the United States.

One of the Estes Valley programs is the Students as Scientists Program, a collaboration between Estes Park High School’s talented and gifted program and Rocky Mountain National Park’s (RMNP) Continental Divide Research Learning Center. The program was established in 2007 when the district hired a talented and gifted/science/STEM teacher and coordinator. The program began by introducing middle and high school students to the Students as Scholars Institute and Science Olympiad programs. It is through these programs that the relationship with RMNP began in 2008. Since that time, numerous student projects, programs, and course curricula have been developed to enhance students’ skills. Local to global connections are made through projects with Monteverdi, Costa Rica, (sister city to Estes Park) and Zacopane, Poland (gateway community to Tatra National Park, sister park to RMNP). Students are considered youth scientists and placed on a pathway to a career in the sciences through their diverse experiences and mentoring.

Numerous local, state, federal, and international cooperators and project partnerships have been developed to support science activities for these students. An example of this collaboration is exemplified in a project where students in Estes Park and in Monteverde are participating in a mountain lion monitoring project in tandem with RMNP and the Santa Elena Cloud Forest. Students are making several podcast that will be available on RMNP’s website, attracting an international audience to their work.

The key to the program’s success is threefold: 1) wonderful support, partnership, and cooperation by numerous professionals, 2) dedication of students, and 3) relevancy of the program’s content—it is focused on real-world applicability of the scientific investigation and research in which students are involved. As a result of the program, students are prepared to do research, make informed decisions, set goals for themselves, explore careers and interest areas, and ultimately know and understand the unique environment in which they live.

“I’m willing to freeze off my fingers in the national park in the name of science! You inspire me to be a scientist.” - Ted, seventh grade student
Perhaps no one has done more for the advancement of the field of environmental education (EE) in Colorado than Marcella Wells. For over 25 years, Marcella has made significant contributions to EE by combining academic wisdom and creative energy to bring thoughtful organization and inspiration to the discipline. As a teacher, coach, and mentor to countless students and professionals, Marcella has shared her planning, coaching, and evaluation tools, inspiring all who work with her.

Early in her decade with Colorado State University (CSU), Marcella focused on informal learning and natural resources while teaching courses, such as Environmental Education, Leisure Studies, and Interpretive Planning. She developed CSU’s first EE course and her innovations live on, as current professors still rely on some of her original materials for today’s curriculum. For a time, Marcella also directed the CSU Environmental Learning Center (ELC) as a center for education and stewardship. In one of her more creative projects, funded by the Berger Foundation, she worked with local youth to explore what concrete principles drive successful EE for youth. The results of this project helped guide subsequent program development for CSU’s ELC.

During the next decade, Marcella’s influence as a private consultant expanded to include contributions to EE nationally. She completed over 50 projects with nearly three dozen clients, including numerous national, state, and local parks, and natural areas. She provided assistance in planning, training, and visitor research for learning institutions of all types. In a project with Gore Range Nature Science School in Avon, Colorado, she and a colleague evaluated the effectiveness of the school’s fifth- and seventh-grade field studies nature programs. She later planned and developed content for the exhibits of their new Avon campus. With Colorado State Parks, Marcella mentored numerous parks in developing interpretive master plans for defining their interpretative and EE messages and initiatives. Over the years, she has conducted evaluations at nearly a dozen National Parks with the intent of improving visitor experiences. In a National Science Foundation funded project with the Biodiversity Project, Marcella conducted an evaluation to inform a national agenda for biodiversity education. And for the Environmental Education and Training Assistance Partnership (EETAP) she and a colleague conducted a national evaluation project designed to inform decisions for building capabilities among EE professionals in all states.

Now in her third decade as an educator and evaluator, Marcella is fascinated with the future of education. In 2011, Marcella was invited to keynote CAEE’s annual Teaching OUTSIDE the Box Conference. In her talk she shared a brief historical context for education, discussed educational trends for the 21st century, and speculated about possible significant educational transformation in the future. Most recently, Marcella is working with two colleagues to finish a book about integrating visitor perspectives in interpretive planning to be published this year by Left Coast Press.

From her years as a professor at CSU, to service on national boards and working with park educators, to serving on the northern Colorado steering committee for the Children and Nature Connection, Marcella strives to ensure exemplary learner experiences in schools, museums, and naturescapes. In fact, there is no stronger advocate for learners than Marcella.

“Marcella is always asking the best questions and challenging each of us to look at things differently. Because of her long-term and passionate approach, she inspires everyone she works with to make EE better. Each day I hope my efforts as an environmental educator have made a difference. Because Marcella has touched my career, it is more likely that hope is a reality.” - Mary Ann Bonnell, 2002 Enos Mills Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient
The mission of the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) is to serve all sectors of the Colorado community by improving the collective effectiveness of environmental education (EE). CAEE enhances Colorado’s EE community by providing professional development opportunities, coordinating support services, and facilitating communication and networking between Colorado’s EE providers and the public. CAEE was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to serve the shared interests of public agencies, businesses, educators, community organizations, and individuals distributing and using EE.

Priority programs and services

CAEE is a national leader in innovative, inclusive, and cutting-edge approaches to statewide EE capacity building. Four key strategies anchor and guide CAEE’s EE programs and services: Connect, Educate, Empower, and Influence.

• Educators connect through CAEE’s new EE Directory with its fresh look and innovative features. CAEE has established itself as the hub and premier resource for educators to access the tools and partners they need in providing high-quality EE in Colorado.

• CAEE provides multiple professional development opportunities enhancing the knowledge and skills of environmental educators, including the 12th Annual Teaching OUTSIDE the Box Conference in Loveland, Colorado, from April 27-29, 2012.

• CAEE is empowering leadership and inclusiveness within the EE community by acting as a crucial role model for others to continue working towards becoming a more inclusive professional field and organization. CAEE’s Blueprint for Inclusiveness serves as a guiding document for its accomplishments.

• By building support for EE with leaders and decision makers, CAEE is influencing the creation of a coordinated strategy to ensure all learners have access to quality EE. Adoption of the Environmental Literacy Plan by the Colorado State Board of Education will impact 800,000 learners across the state and CAEE was asked to play a lead role in its development.

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CAEE membership

Create a relationship with CAEE through membership and become a part of the largest professional organization for environmental educators in the state. CAEE supports its more than 800 members by advocating for the field, facilitating professional development and networking opportunities, and providing the tools to facilitate communication. CAEE provides you with relevance and connections, as well as an instant network of other professional educators, programs, resources, workshops, and many other benefits including:

• Monthly newsletter with invitations to participate in professional development workshops and networking events
• Discounts to many CAEE functions
• Involvement in the statewide EE Advisory Council, which provides input and feedback about CAEE’s priorities, opportunities, programs, and services
• Opportunities to be a part of multiple and diverse committees accomplishing outstanding and meaningful work

Membership rates

Student or Teacher: $15/year
Individual: $35/year
Organizational: $65/year
Corporation: $500/year

Join at www.caee.org or by contacting the CAEE Office.
CAEE works to ensure everyone in Colorado has an opportunity to learn about the environment where they live. We value inclusiveness and welcome everyone to the field of environmental education.