



City of Grand Junction  
Clifton Water District  
CSU Cooperative Extension  
Town of Palisade  
Ute Water Conservancy District

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Vital water education starts early for students in the Grand Valley

By JOE BURTARD

Special to the Sentinel

It is very common for students to learn some type of water-related curriculum at every grade level from kindergarten to high school. Because of this, the City of Grand Junction, Clifton Water and Ute Water Conservancy District have teamed up with Mesa County Valley School District 51, private schools and local home-schooled groups to provide educational materials. For the past 14 years, water providers have also teamed to present the Children's Water Festival, which welcomed nearly 1,900 students to Mesa State College this spring.

Each year, water providers supply fifth-grade students with WaterWise activity kits through the Resource Action Program. Each kit contains water-related activities and home projects as well as water conservation tools such as faucet aerators. Students are then able to take home what they learned in the classroom and incorporate the hands-on experience they received at the Children's Water Festival.

One of Colorado's largest water festivals takes place in Grand Junction every spring. This year, 255 volunteer presenters and students and teachers from 32 schools attended the festival. Fifth-grade students from Parachute to Mack are invited each year to Mesa State College, where they are given the opportunity to learn about the many aspects of water. This festival also introduces students to a number of water-related careers and promotes higher education.

Presentations cover a variety of topics including water safety, water law, endangered species, chemistry, engineering and climate. When Pomona Elementary student Morgan Quist was asked for one important fact about water that she learned at the festival she replied, "Farmers and irrigators need a lot more water than what you use for domestic and recreational uses." She added, "400 more inches of rain falls in Hawaii than in Egypt." Loma Elementary student Hailey Vidmar said she learned "it takes 12 to 15 hours to clean water."

Students who attended the Children's Water Festival 14 years ago are now embarking on water-related careers, purchasing homes and making water-wise decisions that they will pass on to their children. The effort we make today in educating our youth will help us in the future as we search for new ways to protect and conserve our natural resources.

*We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.*