

THE CHILDREN'S WATER FESTIVAL

Central Colorado Water Conservancy District's oldest and most continuous education program is the Children's Water Festival. First presented in 1991, it is the second oldest water festival in the country.

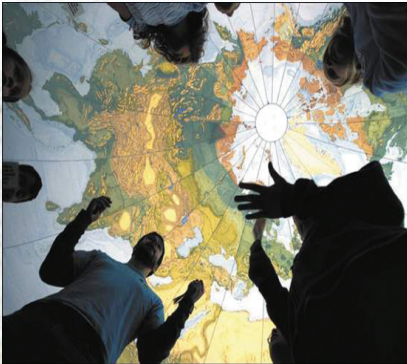
From its beginnings, Central's staff has strived to bring the best quality presenters and exhibitors to each year's festival.

The event provides a free, day long adventure for area students to learn about all aspects of water in an interactive, hands-on way.

Presenters volunteer their time and come from all walks of life to teach the students. There are representatives from the Dairywomen, the Foundation for Agriculture, the Colorado Division of Wildlife and water departments from the cities of Greeley and Fort Collins, just to name a few. In 2009, there were over 65 presenters and exhibitors.

Though it has changed over the years from 5th grade students to 4th grade students, the numbers of children who attend keeps growing. All 4th grade teachers from

Ault to Brighton and from Windsor to Wiggins are invited. The most recent festival attracted over 1,100 students, including the first ever group of home school students to attend.



Central staff is also constantly seeking to improve and re-invigorate the festival.

In 2009 the Water Festival found a new home, the University of Northern Colorado. The Greeley, Colorado, campus is perfect for the event. All the presentations and exhibits fit nicely into the Student Center or are conveniently outside on the grass lawns. With so many presenters and students attending it is important to have a location like this, where the classes can move easily and quickly from one presentation to the next.

The theme for the 2009 festival, "Wild about Water" opened the door for other new ideas as well. There were many new presentations and exhibits. A big hit with the students were the live bald eagle and owl brought by the Rocky Mountain Raptor Center. There was a magician, puppet show and a

story-teller for the first time.

Old stand-bys have been updated. The Water Wizard competition (a water knowledge trivia bowl) saw its first changes since 1991. The questions were presented through a Power Point on a large screen. The kids had electronic buzzers to signal they had an answer, and lights flashed to indicate who buzzed in first. So many classes wanted to participate in Water Wizards there had to be two sessions scheduled.

Other new changes were more organizational. For the first time there was a Children's Water Festival Committee to help plan the event. The committee members volunteered their time for months because they feel so strongly about the importance of the festival. Their input was a boon to the overall success of the day.

Numerous volunteers are needed every year to help run the festival, and now receive more training than ever before.

Volunteers are recruited from the event's sponsors (CCWCD and the City of Greeley), from students at UNC, and local service organizations.

Festival organizers receive a huge helping hand each year from Colorado businesses who agree to sponsor portions of the festival. These sponsorships not only help defray costs, but also allow classes to attend that otherwise would not be able to due to the cost of buses.

Central staff will continue to look for new ways to keep the Children's Water Festival fresh and exciting.

To learn more about attending, presenting, sponsoring or volunteering at the festival, contact Kathy Parker at 970-330-4540.

