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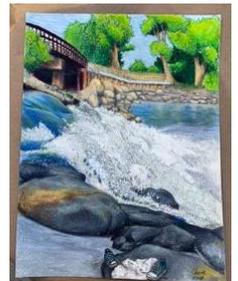
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Five Colorado Students Win Cash Prizes from Water '22 for Best Creative Work That Expresses Passion About Our State's Water

169 submissions from K-12 kids throughout the state shared passion for and connection to Colorado water

DENVER – (Nov. 16, 2022) – [Water '22](#), a statewide, year-long initiative that implores Coloradans to take an active role in securing the state's water future, today announced the winners of its Student Showcase that encouraged Colorado students, grades K-12 and ages 5-19, to create a work that reflects a place, thing, or activity they love connected to water that is within their local watershed or river basin. Five winners received top cash prizes including:

Grand Prize (\$2,000): **Cheyenne Comer, 11th grade, East High School, Pueblo, Colo. Painting & Drawing Submission - Arkansas River flowing into Runyon Lake.** "I drew it using watercolor and colored pencils because I thought it would be fitting for this project," said Comer in her submission. "I chose this picture because it's just a really nice memory of me and my friends playing in the water and admiring the waterfall."



First Place (\$1,000): **Oskar (kindergarten) and Teddy Leopold (third grade), Niwot Elementary School, Niwot, Colo. LEGO Model and Engineering Submission - A LEGO model of a watershed and a fictional story about water users.** "Everyone uses water from power, to recreational, to irrigation, to drinking, help fight fires, and ranching for the cattle," said the Leopold brothers in their submission. "It's all connected by water."



Second Place (\$500): **Leia Albrecht, 11th Grade, Durango High School, Durango, Colo. Creative Writing submission - A short story about a spot along the La Plata River.** "I live in an area filled with rich history, dependent on the water we receive from the river. It connects all of the people of this area..." said Albrecht in her submission. "The water also connects us back to our ancestors. Mine have lived and worked here in Colorado for generations. I have a baby brother, only 18 months old. I want him to know the river the way I know it."

Third Place (\$250): **Erica Dornberger, 8th grade, Aurora Quest K-8, Aurora, Colo. Painting & Drawing Submission.** "The kids of our neighborhood spend the last of those carefree days before school starts wading through a small creek that runs behind our houses. I was seven when I first saw a crawdad," said Dornberger in her submission. "I want others to experience the joy that we experience from the crawdads but to remember not to make the mistake of treating them like toys. They are alive too and we must let them live, admiring from a distance."



"We are so thrilled that so many young Coloradans took interest in our state's water future, using their creativity and talent to share why our watersheds are important to them," said Jayla Poppleton, Executive

Director for Water Education Colorado. “Our Student Showcase was an incredible way to highlight the messages of our Water ’22 campaign which emphasize our sense of pride and responsibility as a headwaters state.”

The Student Showcase was designed to help young people connect with the value of water in daily life and the natural and built world around them, encourage critical thinking, and emphasize the crucial role students play as water leaders, helping to identify solutions for water sustainability. A total of 169 students from across the state, between the grades of K-12 and ages 5-19, submitted a wide variety of creative works in categories that including creative writing, critical writing, graphic design, digital art and Architecture, painting and drawing, photography and film, modeling and engineering, multimedia, music and performance arts, sculpture and ceramics and miscellaneous. Approximately 20 Colorado English- and Spanish-speaking judges, comprised of artists and water industry professionals across the state, determined the top 40 entrants through a collaborative determination process. Some notable judges included:

- [Patrick Mueller](#), Artistic Director of Control Group Productions, a Denver-based expeditionary and immersive performance company and producing organization.
- [Rik Sargent](#), award-winning public art sculptor. Three of his public bronze sculptures tell the story of Colorado as a headwater state and its relationship to water.
- [Dr. Kathryn Winograd](#), creative writing teacher, award-winning poet, and essayist.

“Such a beautiful blast of promise and joy in the Water ’22 Student Showcase,” said Winograd. “Our Colorado K-12 students are blossoming into the writers, artists, and scientists of every kind who will wow us in the world to come, not only with their creativity and vision, but with their passion for sustaining our environment and its precious natural resources.”

The top 40 entrants from each age division will receive a gift certificate to use toward a 2023 Colorado State Parks pass or park entry, an invitation to meet state government and water sector leaders at the state Capitol in January, and have their work showcased on the Water ’22 website, www.water22.org. Best of all, the works will be displayed in venues across the state such as such as water centers, libraries, museums and state government buildings.

Teachers who assisted students in the Water ’22 Student Showcase were entered into a drawing to win one of two \$250 cash prizes. Winning teachers include: Celeste Bennett, a homeschool educator through the Two Roads Charter School in Lakewood, and Malisha Reed, principal and agriculture teacher at Nucla High School, Nucla, Colo.

The Water ’22 Student Showcase was presented by Water Education Colorado the statewide nonprofit organization spearheading Water ’22, in partnership with Colorado Humanities. Sponsors of the Showcase include the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Walton Family Foundation, Molson Coors Beverage Company, Chevron, and Wana Brands. Prizes were made possible through in-kind and monetary donations from Colorado Parks & Wildlife and the Kenneth King Foundation.

About Water Education Colorado

Established in 2002, Colorado’s most significant drought year on record, [Water Education Colorado](#) (WECO) is the leading organization for informing and engaging Coloradans on key water issues to help them make smart decisions for a sustainable water future. WECO was created with funding from the state legislature in order to inform Coloradans about water as a limited and critical resource and to advance informed decision-making with no policy agenda. A 501c3 nonprofit with a trusted reputation for providing policy-neutral news and informational resources, engaging learning experiences, and empowering leadership programs, WECO led development of the Statewide Water Education Action Plan for Colorado, 2021-2025, and is the lead organizer of Water ’22.