

.....more on Anita's receipt of the Enos A. Mills Award

Anita Started her EE impact on Colorado youth in 1982 instructing cross-country skiing and backpacking for the Balarat Outdoor School in Denver, and as a trained Project Wild instructor in the 1990s. After getting her teaching certificate, Anita consistently made an impact with her students through hands-on outdoor skills, EE projects and field experiences. Every class Anita has taught to cross-country ski through the "Skis for Kids" program she and her husband Richard and many volunteers established in 1987 has experienced in-depth winter ecology instruction and learning.

"Every child I ever taught experienced nature: learning to cross-country ski, creating schoolyard habitats, learning how native species thrive in their web of life and observing how humans play an integral part in nature. I tried to have my students feel a sense of responsibility to learn about and experience our world, and practice responsible recreation and conservation efforts. Over 27 years I taught thousands of kids about what it means to be a responsible human intertwined with our natural world, and I hope they remember that we are nature," explained Evans.

Joining forces with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in 2013, Anita helped facilitate the written curriculum and publication of the Delta Teaching Environments Naturally teachers guide for all grade levels, connecting youth to the vast resource of public lands here on the Western Slope of Colorado. She also joined up with the U.S. Forest Service in 2014 to expand the Skis For Kids Programming with a "More Kids in the Woods" program, ensuring every 4th and 6th grader in Delta County could experience winter in Colorado on Cross Country Skis and learn about our largest reservoir of water—mountain snow.

Since retiring from teaching in 2014, Anita has assisted with teacher education classes put on by Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) in a program called OUT, or Outdoor Understanding for Teachers, helping with four teacher workshops a year on a variety of topics such as Bears, Elk, Beaver, Fish, Aquatic Macroinvertebrates, Wildlife Diseases, Winter Animal Adaptations, and many more.

In 2015, Anita helped facilitate a coalition of EE providers for three years in order to gain funding from Great Outdoors Colorado in 2018 to officially establish the Nature Connection in Hotchkiss, which is supported by the Delta County School District for Delta County and Olathe. This is where the Skis for Kids program came to reside, and with the addition of staffing and outdoor gear established the Learn to Bike program, paddle boarding/river experiences, rock climbing and weeklong youth summer camps.

In 2018, Anita's passions and insights spearheaded the creation of the nonprofit Friends of Youth and Nature (FOYAN), increasing the impact on youth every year, and supporting EE experiences for over 8,500 youth in 2023 alone. FOYAN is where her heart lives now, working with the seven member board across the four Western Slope counties of Mesa, Delta, Montrose, and Ouray counties. FOYAN's focus is on four areas of EE: farm to school projects; watershed education; scholarships for teachers and youth for field trip busing, program fees, or special projects; and the Together for Resilient Youth (TRY) program, facilitating 6 outdoor events a year and reaching out to a segment of our local youth most in need of mentored outdoor skill building, peer connections (without screen time), and creating emotional connections to our beautiful Western Colorado wild places.

"There is something to be said about working together to help make a better world for those generations that follow us. We are nature. We are an intricate part of the web of life in this world, and how we interact with nature determines the path our world will take in the future. We all have a chance to choose our path in this world, shaping that future through our sphere of influence. That sphere

expands, shifts, and changes throughout our lifetime allowing us to touch the lives of others in many positive ways. We have a responsibility to share our knowledge of nature through discovery, teaching, and learning experiences. How has Nature shaped you, your world, the world you share with your loved ones and acquaintances?" asks Evans.

As part of her award, Anita received a signed copy of one of Enos Mills 16 collectible books entitled "The Spell of the Rockies." Anita plans to continue her work with FOYAN and FOYAN partners to make a lasting positive impact on the lives of local youth. You can read more about Anita and past Enos A. Mills Award recipients here: <https://caee.org/awards>