

Stakeholder Connection

Your news source on the Institute for Environmental Solutions projects and progress



Volume Seven, Number One, April 2015

IES Preserve the Greenbelt Program Receives CAEE Award for Excellence

IES's pilot environmental education program, Preserve the Greenbelt (2013-2014), was selected by the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) to receive the 2014 Award for Excellence in the Nonprofit category. CAEE is an organization devoted to ensuring Coloradans have access to quality environmental education.

As part of the Preserve the Greenbelt Program, students at Wheat Ridge area schools explored ecology and stewardship in their local open space, and planted over 300 trees and shrubs. This innovative program consisted of hands-on classroom workshops, guided nature discovery walks, and tree and shrub planting.

IES thanks the project partners and participants for their enthusiasm and the Xcel Energy Foundation for its generous support. The participating schools included Kullerstrand Elementary, Mountain Phoenix Community, and Wheat Ridge High School. Special thanks to Margaret Paget, Wheat Ridge Forestry and Open Space Supervisor, for her indispensable support and expertise. Betty Jo Page, Art Hertel, and staff members of the Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department helped make the project successful. IES was honored on March 28, 2015, at the CAEE Annual Awards Banquet.



IES is excited to build on the award-winning pilot with this spring's Growing the Greenbelt Education and Environmental Health program. More information: Sean M. Mangus, Tree Project Manager, sean@i4es.org

IES Chemical Footprint Project Team Teaches Teachers at Statewide Conference



The IES Chemical Footprint (CFP) Project Team presented a workshop for teachers on "Reduce Your Chemical Footprint: Kids Can Prevent Pollution" on March 27. The workshop was part of the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education (CAEE) Advancing Environmental Education Conference 2015, "Explore Research, Elevate Practice, Spark Collaboration", at the Auraria Higher Education Center. It included a technical briefing on chemicals of concern, why they are harmful, and how they can be prevented. The briefing for teachers was followed by a jam packed hands-on tutorial where all participants made their own non-toxic hand sanitizer, insect repellent and all-purpose household cleaner. The goals of this workshop were to demonstrate methods for introducing elementary school children to complex environmental issues while showing how hands-on activities foster deeper levels of knowledge and commitment to acting on that knowledge. IES was pleased to participate in the annual CAEE conference which serves teachers statewide. More information: Carol Lyons, Carol@i4es.org.

What does an “Ecological Health Program” Look Like?

The IES Growing the Greenbelt Education and Ecological Health Program is underway. The program, based on the award winning pilot program Preserve the Greenbelt, combines community education initiatives and ecological improvements. Using proven tree science and urban forestry techniques, IES and our project partners are helping to restore ecological health to the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt by planting native trees and shrubs and removing harmful invasive species.

IES is working closely with Wheat Ridge Forestry and Open Space Supervisor Margaret Paget to evaluate Greenbelt sites in need of restoration, which will become our planting sites for Wheat Ridge High School students this month. The project targets invasive species such as Russian olive, common teasel, cutleaf teasel, leafy spurge, and yellow toadflax for careful removal. These invasive species will be replaced with native Colorado tree species such as the hybrid cottonwood, lanceleaf cottonwood, peachleaf willow, sumac, thinleaf alder, and wax current.



The project is designed to mitigate ecological degradation which has occurred in the Greenbelt during recent years. Ecological issues include erosion along Clear Creek, past grazing and haying which has done considerable damage to natural wildlife, and damage caused by the severe hailstorm of 2009. By combining invasive species removal with proper planting of native species and long term plant care, IES will continue to help the ecological growth in the Greenbelt! This program is supported by a generous grant from the Colorado Tree Coalition and by matching funds provided by the Wheat Ridge City Council and the City of Wheat Ridge. More information: John Kelly, IES Research Associate, john@ies.org.

Check Your Labels! Hazardous Chemicals Found in Household Products



Reduce your chemical footprint by reading the labels of household and personal care products before you buy them! Many common consumer products contain chemicals that have harmful effects on the environment and human health. Three chemicals to look out for are triclosan, parabens and oxybenzone. Triclosan is an antibacterial additive found in many soaps, body washes, deodorants, toothpaste, shaving gel, and cosmetics, as well as dishwashing liquids, cutting boards, toys and fabrics. The U.S. FDA currently claims triclosan is safe. However, concerns are growing about the consequences of long term, low-level exposure to the chemical. “A growing body of evidence shows that triclosan can lead to developmental and reproductive problems in animals and potentially in humans,” says Benny Pycke, a bioscience engineer at Arizona State

University (ACS National Meeting, August 2014).

According to the FDA, parabens are the most common preservatives in cosmetic products and are also added to food, drug and household products. When you check product labels make sure to look for common parabens like methylparaben, propylparaben, and butylparaben (www.fda.gov). Parabens can cause developmental and reproductive problems in animal cells, as documented in a research report by Vo et al. in the 2010 issue of Reproductive Toxicology. Parabens have also been detected in breast cancer tumors (Darbre, Journal of Applied Toxicology 2004). For a safer alternative, stick to products that are oil or powder based because they require fewer preservatives and contain fewer parabens (Aburjai and Natsheh, Phytotherapy Research 2003).

Oxybenzone is used as a UV filter and found in many sunscreens. Oxybenzone is an endocrine disrupter that specifically alters estrogen receptor processes and raises carcinogenic concerns. There are many safe and effective alternatives, such as sunscreens with titanium dioxide and zinc oxides (Hexsel et al., J Am Acad Dermatol). More information: Maia Murphy-Williams, IES Graduate Intern, Maia@ies.org.

IES Receives Grant Funding From Colorado Garden Foundation



The Colorado Garden Foundation has awarded grant funding in support of the IES Sheridan Quincy Trail Improvement and Stewardship Project for 2015. Through grants and scholarship programs, the Colorado Garden Foundation is dedicated to furthering horticulture throughout Colorado. IES is honored to receive the Colorado Garden Foundation 2015 grant.

The goal of this IES project is to revitalize Sheridan's Quincy Trail between Irving Street and Federal Boulevard. Sheridan public school students will participate in ecology workshops and plant trees, shrubs, and grasses along the trail's drainage corridor. IES will recruit, train, and organize a sustainable Sheridan Tree Stewards team to care for the new plants. These efforts will reduce erosion, decrease pollution levels, and improve storm water quality in the South Platte drainage basin.

IES is pleased to add the Colorado Garden Foundation to the list of project partners. Project partners include the City of Sheridan, Sheridan School District No. 2, DesignWorkshop Xcel Energy Foundation, and the University of Colorado Denver Urban and Regional Planning Program. More information: Sean M. Mangus, Tree Project Manager, sean@i4es.org

IES Institute News

IES is pleased to introduce the newest members of The Tree Project Team, Emily Alvarez and Greg Colucci. Emily holds a B.S. in Urban Planning from Arizona State University and is now working on a Master of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Colorado Denver. Greg has a B.A. in Environmental Planning and Management from the State University of New York College at Plattsburgh. He is serving on the Tree team while completing his Master of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Colorado Denver.

Maia Murphy-Williams joined the Chemical Footprint Project Team in January. She has a B.A. in Biology from Colorado College.

IES Opportunities

IES is looking for an energetic professional to join the IES Board of Directors who wants to ensure the application of sound scientific solutions to our pressing environmental challenges. Please contact IES at Solutions@i4es.org for a position description and application.

IES is seeking motivated volunteers and graduate interns who are passionate about protecting the environment to join our project teams. We also have openings for Development / Fundraising, Social Media Marketing, and Web Development / Programming Volunteers and Interns. Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter to Solutions@i4es.org.

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