

D51 GIFTED EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

April 2023

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News from our GT Director

We are in the last quarter of the 2022-23 school year and summer will be here before we know it. Here are some things to keep in mind for this summer...

- D51 GT Department provides [scholarships](#) for students to extend and enrich their strengths. Please note that all scholarships are due by May 11th this year.
- If you are not sure what opportunities are out there for your student to attend, check out our [22-23 GT Scholarship Enrichment Opportunities](#). This is not an endorsed or recommended list only offered as a resource for information. If you know of other opportunities and camps, please let us know.
- A list of [Academic Programs and Competitions](#) can be found on Colorado Association for Gifted and Talented's webpage.
- Check out the [National Association for Gifted Children information on planning for summer](#). This includes a list of questions to be able to answer about any camp or program your student



FOUR CORE BEHAVIORS

D51 focuses on the whole learner to foster growth and high achievement.

D51 believes in the strengths of our people, our schools, and our communities.

D51 values individuality, inclusivity, and belonging.

D51 commits to continuous improvement.

VISION

Engage, equip, and empower each and every student, each and every day.

MISSION

D51 engages our community, families, and staff to deliver individualized, collaborative, and challenging educational experiences to prepare each and every student for their brightest future.

attends.

Your GT Teacher or GT Liaison may have other ideas and suggestions specific for the strengths of your student.

Student Work - Tope Elementary School

Submitted by Rochelle Morrison, GT teacher

I am thrilled that a few of my GT kids wanted to start a journalism club at Tope. Olympia Albers and Olive McRobbie brainstormed with me in December about starting a club at our school. We have had 2 issues so far, one in February and one in March. The newest issue will be printed for April on Monday and hung in the bathrooms on clips (their idea to mimic the Stall Street Journal at CMU).



April STEAM @ TOPE Tope Times.pdf

[Download](#)

1.6 MB

Learning Fun!

Submitted by Jennifer Dennison, GT teacher

Students at Rocky Mountain and Fruitvale Elementary created mazes. This unit included solving problems for area, utilizing or adding to a floor plan, creating a scale, and collaborating to complete a game for second graders. Students used classroom materials.

This is a reflection from several fifth grade students:

The difficult part was getting our structure together.

The part that went well was working together to make our project the best we could.

We enjoyed making the decorations for the maze.

We worked well as a team. You have to agree on certain things when working on a team and you have to work together to solve problems.

When creating or designing not everything in your plan is going to work so you have to plan out certain possible situations that can happen in the process.



Fruitvale Elementary students with their completed mazes.

Student Spotlight

Submitted by Jennifer Dennison, GT teacher

James Swedenburg has been a student at Fruitvale Elementary for three years. James defines “gifted” as different than most other people but in a good way. He likes math, reading, and learning about making money. Math is his favorite subject. He would like to improve his skills as a writer, and continue to grow in his strength area, math.

James enjoys skating, building little wooden brick castles, and playing Uno with his family. When he is not at school, he like to play board games, card games, and watch YouTube. Currently, James is excited about a field trip to Ameritowne.

Migdael Grijalva Solis is a fourth grader at Rocky Mountain Elementary. He enjoys spending time with his family, coding, and playing fetch with his dogs. When he is not at school he enjoys watching TV and going shopping.

Math and science are Migdael’s favorite subjects. Areas of interest include bugs and animals. He really enjoys learning about different species of ants, their habitat, and how they survive. Fractions, decimals, and geometry are units that Migdael likes to study. Other interests include engineering and topics he hasn’t learned about yet.

Migdael is proud of his grades and his hard work. Summer plans include spending time with his family and traveling.

The Power of Play for Parents

A Joyful Group Coaching Experience

Thursdays beginning April 13 at 11AM PDT

Join a group of progressive parents to explore the complex dynamics of burnout and find creative solutions. Energize yourself for the daily challenges of bringing out your children's unique best and guiding them through challenges like

- Perfectionism
- Emotional Intensities
- Social Anxiety
- Giftedness Beyond Academics
- Underachievement/Motivation

Your Experience will include

- Five Weeks of 1 Hour Interactive Joyful Learning
- 10+ Practical Playful Behavior Tools to apply instantly
- Mutual Encouragement
- Interaction with like-minded parents

Rate: \$111 per family

The Science behind the Power of Play:

- **Play** shapes the brain and invigorates the soul.

- **Play** accelerates learning and boosts productivity.
- **Play** builds trust and respect.
- **Play** heals emotions and prevents violence.
- **Play** is the first language we use

***This program is not facilitated or endorsed by D51 or the GT program.**

The GT scholarship program is available to help with the cost of the program (application linked below).



Scholarship Application

22-23 GT Scholarship Application.pdf

[Download](#)

85.9 KB

22-23 GT Spanish Scholarship Application.pdf

[Download](#)

74.1 KB

Facebook

Westslope CO Gifted & Talented

This group is to support Westernslope Parents of Gifted & Talented and 2E kids.

We share hope, empowerment, ideas, opportunities, and overall support each other.



Fruita Monument High School Presents:

**April 6th, 7th,
and 8th @7 pm**



**Scan for
tickets**

The Marvelous
Wonderettes

Produced by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing. (www.broadwaylicensing.com)

Fruita Monument High School Presents:

*Scan for
tickets:*



Cafe

Murder

Dinner is an option for evening shows, but those tickets must be pre-ordered before April 12th. Tickets with dinner cost \$17, tickets for just the show cost \$7.



**April 14th, Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Show: 7:30 p.m.
April 15th, Matinee: 2 p.m., Dinner: 6:30, Show:
7:30.**

Cafe Murder: A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery By Nathan Hartwick. Produced by special arrangement with Pioneer Drama Service, Inc. Denver, Colorado

**FMHS VOLLEYBALL
FRESHMAN PREP
CAMP**

June 5-8, 2023

Open to incoming Freshman girls and boys who want to explore or refine volleyball skills, play games, meet friends, and be part of the FMHS VB family. Come to learn and have lots of fun.

Visit the website and register at:

www.fmvolleyball.com



Wildkitten Kids Camp

Hosted by the FMHS Girls Volleyball Team

June 12-15, 2023



Come learn new skills, experience game play, have fun, meet new friends, meet some of the high school players, get a t-shirt, and be part of our amazing FMHS volleyball family.

Age divisions for athletes entering grades 3-8, boys and girls are all welcome. **THE BEST VOLLEYBALL CAMP IS BACK!!!** Be prepared for 4 days of VB fun. Find more details and register at:

www.fmvolleyball.com



McConnell Science Museum

EUREKA!

SUMMER CAMPS

Camps available for ages 5-15

WEEK LONG STEAM CAMPS
FROM MAY 24 - AUGUST 10

Camp Topics:

- LEGOs
- Robotics
- Coding
- Girls Inspire
- Traveling day programs
- Traveling overnight programs
- and many more!

Scholarships are available!

REGISTER: eurekasciencemuseum.org



CHS CO-ED CHEER TRYOUTS

ANYONE CAN COME!!
NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED!

TRYOUT DAY: APRIL 15TH 9AM-11 AM

WHAT YOU NEED TO ATTEND TRYOUTS

- \$140 athletic fee paid for (mypaymentplus)
- Current Physical (WWC \$20 fee)
- Athlete Registration Completed (centralhswarriors.com- athlete registration)

OPEN STUNT CLINICS

- March 6 – 5:15-6:15 PM
- March 13 – 5:15-6:15 PM
- March 27 – 5:15-6:15 PM (Parent meeting at 6:15-6:45)
- April 3 – 5:15-6:15 PM

TRYOUT CLINICS

- April 13 – 4:00-6:00 PM
- April 14 – 4:00-6:00 PM



✉ TRACY.ARLEDGE@DSISCHOOLS.ORG



6th Annual

stepupwesternslope.org

APRIL, 29th 2023
9 AM

Long Family Memorial Park
3117 F Rd.
Grand Junction, CO 81504





Spring 2023 Challenge: March 1-April 30

Walk, Bike, or Roll to School + Win Prizes

- Download the Mobile App, log active trips to/from school
- Elementary & Middle School Spring Walk & Wheel Challenge
 - March 1 - April 30
 - Students can count up to 10 trips per week towards the contest
 - Parents can easily track multiple kids from same household
 - Use the same device throughout the contest to log trips
- Earn prizes for 3 levels
 - Level 1 (6 Trips) = Dino Stickers
 - Level 2 (15 Trips) = Voucher for a local sweet treat
 - Level 3 (25 Trips) = Voucher for local activity venue

The School with the MOST participation on May 3 will earn new recess equipment, valued at \$200.00



MesaCountySafeRoutes.com



Desafío de Primavera 2023: del 1 de Marzo al 30 de Abril

Ve a la escuela caminando, en bici o en cualquier tipo de rodado (sin motor) + gana premios

- Descargue la aplicación móvil, registre los viajes activos hacia/desde la escuela
- Desafío de Primavera Caminando y en Ruedas para alumnos de Primaria y Secundaria
 - Del 1 de Marzo al 30 de Abril
 - Los estudiantes pueden contar hasta 10 viajes por semana para el concurso
 - Los padres de familia pueden fácilmente mantener el registro de varios niños del mismo hogar
 - Usa el mismo dispositivo durante todo el concurso para registrar los viajes
- Gana premios en 3 niveles
 - Nivel 1 (6 Viajes) = Calcomanías de Dino
 - Nivel 2 (15 viajes) = Cupón de una tienda local para un dulce o golosina
 - Nivel 3 (25 viajes) = Cupón de un establecimiento local para hacer actividades

LA ESCUELA CON MAYOR PARTICIPACIÓN EL 3 DE MAYO GANARÁ UN NUEVO EQUIPO DE RECREO, VALORADO EN \$200



MesaCountySafeRoutes.com



TIGER CUB CAMP 2023



Fundamental Skills Camp Elementary Girls: 1st Grade - 6th Grade (Grade you are going into)

THURSDAY - SATURDAY
25TH - 27TH
MAY 2023
Grand Junction HS

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM TH/F (Lunch 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM)
8:30 AM - 11:30 AM Saturday
Walk-in Registration 8:00 A.M. May 25th
Pre-registration fee \$70 (Form and payment must be received by May 1st)
Registration fee after May 1st \$90
Each camper will receive a t-shirt.
Campers need to bring their own lunch and water bottles.
***NO REFUNDS**

Elite Skills Camp Middle School Girls: 7th - 9th (Grade you are going into)

TUESDAY - THURSDAY
30TH - 1ST
MAY / JUNE 2023
Grand Junction HS

2:00 PM - 6:00 PM
Walk-in Registration 1:30 PM May 30th
Pre-registration fee \$50 (Form and payment must be received by May 1st)
Registration fee after May 1st \$70
Each camper will receive a t-shirt.
Campers should bring water and snacks.
***NO REFUNDS**

Name (first and last): _____ Age: _____

Current School: _____ Grade Next Year: _____

T-Shirt Size (Circle): **Youth** - S M L **Adult** - S M L XL 2XL

Address: _____ Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Insurance acknowledgment

School District #51 does NOT carry any form of accident or medical insurance to pay medical costs should your child be injured. Parent/guardian must carry adequate health and accident insurance or enroll in the district offered insurance in order for the student to participate in the Tiger Skills Camp.

Insurance Carrier and Policy #: _____

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Please fill out this form and email it to
sbrandon@d51schools.org or mail it with payment

to:
Coach Sydni Brandon
Grand Junction High School
1400 N 5th St. Grand Junction, CO 81501

Make checks payable to:
GJHS Girls Basketball

Pre-registration (Received by May 1st)
Cost increases by \$20 after the 1st

***NO REFUNDS**

Call or text Coach Syd with any questions or concerns:
(970) 424 - 7898

Three sports in one fun-filled camp

DATE: May 30, 31, June 1 (Tuesday-Thursday)

WHO: All boys and girls entering grades K-8

LOCATION: Palisade High School



COST: \$65 per sport



Participants may sign up for one, two, or all three sports for an all-day camp experience!



MINI BULLDOG SUMMER SPORTS CAMPS

Our multi-sport camp is designed to teach young athletes a variety of different sports in one setting.

Basketball and Volleyball Camps
Instruction in the fundamental skills of each sport

Track Camp

Age-appropriate speed, agility, and coordination training



K-5th Grade Boys and Girls	
8:30 am-10:00 am	Basketball Camp
10:30 am-12:00 pm	Track Camp
12:00 pm-1:00 pm	Lunch (provide own)
1:30 pm-3:00 pm	Volleyball Camp



6th-8th Grade Boys and Girls	
10:30 am-12:00 pm	Basketball Camp
12:00 pm-1:00 pm	Lunch (provide own)
1:30 pm-3:00 pm	Track Camp
3:30 pm-5:00 pm	Volleyball Camp

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR CAMPS, PLEASE CONTACT OUR HEAD COACHES AND CAMP DIRECTORS

BOYS BASKETBALL
Cory Hitchcock
cory.hitchcock@d51schools.org
(970) 819-5845

TRACK
Jill Reetz
jill.reetz@d51schools.org
(970) 210-2540

GIRLS BASKETBALL
Don Bavor
don.bavor@d51schools.org
(970) 433-4797

VOLLEYBALL
Wendy MacAskill
palrocksvb@yahoo.com
(970) 216-6197

BUILDING FUTURE BULLDOGS

District 51 STUDENT BUS PASS PROGRAM

500
STUDENTS
ENROLLED



Youth 11 & Under
Ride Free With
Any Passenger

D51 Middle & High School Students

Ride Grand Valley Transit FREE

Complete the online form to get started

Pick up the free-ride sticker at participating locations

D51 Schools, GVT Transfer, Mesa County Public Libraries, Grand Junction Parks & Recreation



Check out the Learn to Ride Video
Snap the QR Code



gvt.mesacounty.us


Ages
8-14 years

Cost
\$450 per player
\$325 commuter option

Dates
June 15-18, 2023

Location
Community Hospital
Unity Field
1100 North Ave.
Grand Junction, CO
Maverick Field is on the Colorado Mesa
Campus on the corner of Orchard
Avenue and 12th Street.

For more information please contact:

 **Brandon Bautista**
Assistant Soccer Coach

 970.248.1094 (o)

 bbautista@coloradomesa.edu

2023 CMU Soccer **OVERNIGHT CAMPS**

Our 2023 CMU Winter Break Soccer Camps are designed to introduce players to an environment where they can develop their fundamental skill, learn valuable leadership traits, and grow their love for the game. Morning sessions will primarily be skill based, with afternoons focusing on team play. All skill levels are welcome, and groups will be divided based on ability.

COMMUTER SCHEDULE

June 15-18

Thursday 15 12:45pm check-in / 8:15pm check-out (dinner included)

Friday, Saturday 16 & 17 8:45am check-in / 8:15pm check-out (lunch and dinner included)

Sunday 18 8:45am check-in / 11:15am check-out

DAILY SCHEDULE

Thursday, June 15

11:30am-12:30pm

1pm

1:30pm

5pm

7pm

Check in

Camp Intros & Meeting

at Field (Optional for Parents)

Afternoon Session

Dinner

Games Under the Lights

(Pizza slices available; cash only)

Friday, Saturday June 16 & 17

8am

9:30 am

12pm

1:30pm

5pm

7pm

Breakfast

Morning Session

Lunch

Afternoon Session

Dinner

Games Under the Lights

(Pizza slices available; cash only)

Sunday, June 18

8am

9:30am

11am-12pm

Breakfast

Morning Session (2)

Check Out

WHAT TO BRING

- Pillow, sheets, and blanket
- Towel and toiletries
- Ball
- Cleats
- Shin guards
- Running shoes
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen



 Register online at CMUmavericks.com/camps
For campus maps and directions to campus
visit coloradomesa.edu/maps

Ages
6-14 years

Cost
\$150 for half-day camps
\$250 for full day camps

Dates
Option 1: June 5-9
Option 2: June 26-29

Location
**Community Hospital
Unity Field**
1100 North Ave.
Grand Junction, CO
Unity Field is on the Colorado Mesa
Campus on the corner of Orchard
Avenue and 12th Street.

2023 CMU Summer Soccer DAY & HALF DAY CAMPS

Our 2023 CMU Summer Soccer Camps are designed to introduce players to an environment where they can develop their fundamental skill, learn valuable leadership traits, and grow their love for the game. Morning sessions will primarily be skill based, with afternoons focusing on team play. All skill levels are welcome, and groups will be divided based on ability.

Schedule

9am	Check In
11:45am	Half-Day Checkout
1:30pm	Afternoon Session
3pm	Full Day Check-out

WHAT TO BRING

- Ball
- Cleats
- Running shoes
- Shin guards
- Water bottle
- Sunscreen

For more information please contact:

 Izzi Howard
Assistant Soccer Coach
 970.248.1092 (o)
 ehoward@coloradomesa.edu



 Register online at CMUavericks.com/camps
For campus maps and directions to campus
visit coloradomesa.edu/maps

WINTER/SPRING

2023 ACTIVITY GUIDE

GRAND JUNCTION PARKS AND RECREATION



Southwest Arbor Fest, Page 15

City of Grand Junction
PARKS & RECREATION

CRC

COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER

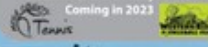
Visit gjparksandrec.org to view the City Council adopted 2022 CRC Plan at Matchett Park and the 2021 PROS Master Plan. See page 2.



Lunch Loop! Phase II to South Camp Rerouted, coming mid-2023. Thank you Partners!



20 Pickleball courts at Lincoln Park
16 Tennis courts at Canyon View
Coming in 2023



Program Registration Begins
TUESDAY JANUARY 3
www.gjparksandrec.org
970.254.3866

Para información en español
página 26

Riverfront Revitalization Continuing
with Dos Rios, Thank you Partners!



New playground, splash park and river restoration coming 2023!

Lincoln Park OPEN TRACK MEET



Sprint, don't walk, to the Lincoln Park Open Track Meet! Offering a variety of different running, jumping, and throwing competitions, this fun meet challenges participants to set and conquer their own goals. Pick your three favorite events for just \$5 and add additional events for only \$1 each. Onsite registration begins at 5:15pm.

Location: LP Track at Stocker Stadium			Fee: \$5
Class #	Date:	Day:	Time:
13763	4/12	W	5:30 PM

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK PARTIES

We've got something sweet and FREE for you and your family! Come get to know your neighbors during the Neighborhood Park Parties.

Saturday, May 6 @ Eagle Rim

Saturday, July 1 @ Riverside

Saturday, September 16 @ Columbine

12:00 – 3:00 P.M.

JOIN US FOR LOTS OF FUN!

- Bump 'N' Jump •
- Music •
- Food Trucks •
- Cornhole •
- Bocce Ball •
- Giant Jenga •
- Connect 4 •
- and much more!

FREE ICE CREAM FOR
THE FIRST 100 KIDS





MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

LEARN HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults.

You'll build skills and confidence you need to reach out and provide initial support to those who are struggling. You'll also learn how to help connect them to appropriate support.

AFTER THE COURSE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:

- Recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Recognize common signs and symptoms of substance use challenges.
- Understand how to interact with a person in crisis.
- Know how to connect a person with help.
- Use self-care tools and techniques.

Join the more than

2.6 MILLION

First Aiders who have chosen to be the difference in their community.

REGISTER TODAY!

Delivery Format:

In-Person

Date and Time:

April 6th , June 6th 8:30 - 5:00pm

Location:

Colorado Mesa University

Where to Register:

jennifer.daniel2@d51schools.org

Learn how to respond with the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan (**ALGEE**):

- A**ssess for risk of suicide or harm.
- L**isten nonjudgmentally.
- G**ive reassurance and information.
- E**ncourage appropriate professional help.
- E**ncourage self-help and other support strategies.

For more information, visit MHFA.org

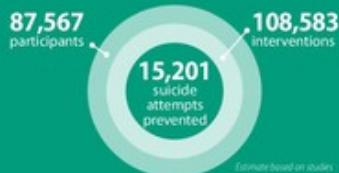


Learn the skills. Help save a life.

Suicide is preventable. Anyone can make a difference.

- Two-day workshop in suicide intervention skills
- Learn and practice a life-saving intervention model
- Widely used by professionals and the general public

ASIST's impact in 2016



ASIST works

Studies show that ASIST participants gain:

- Knowledge about suicide
- Skills to reach out
- Confidence to help save a life

ASIST changes lives

Odds of improvement after receiving an ASIST intervention (2013 study):

- ▲ 35% more hopeful
- ▼ 31% less depressed
- ▼ 46% less overwhelmed
- ▼ 74% less suicidal

Upcoming ASIST workshop

Date: April 20th/21st

Location: CMU Campus

Hosted by: CNC and CMU

Cost: FREE

To inquire or register, email
jennifer.daniels2@d51schools.org

ASIST is cost-effective

50:1 return on investment in decreasing long-term costs of suicide (2015 study)

Learn more about ASIST and see the evidence at www.livingworks.net/ASIST



Life Is Better In



We Make It Better!

REGISTRATION BEGINS:
MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2023

VISIT:
www.gjparksandrec.org

CALL:
970.254.3866

CITY OF
Grand Junction
COLORADO
PARKS & RECREATION



WHY?

**YOU ASKED FOR
IT! WE DID IT!**

WHAT?

Adult English classes for beginners
Space is limited, sign up now!

WHEN?

January 24 - April 14, 2023
Tuesdays and Thursdays 7:00 pm- 8:30 pm

WHERE?

Dual Immersion Academy
552 W Main St

HOW?

Send your name and number to
email: eruizgut@d51schools.org
Call 970-254-5500 ext. 14133

Scan
here to
sign up



¿POR QUÉ?

**¡USTED LO PIDIO!
¡LO HICIMOS!**

¿QUÉ?

¡Clases de inglés para (adultos)
principiantes!
¡Cupo es limitado regístrese ahora!

¿CUÁNDO?

24 de enero al 14 de abril del 2023
martes y jueves 7:00 p.m. a 8:30 p.m.

¿DÓNDE?

Dual Immersion Academy- Escuela DIA
552 W Main St.

¿CÓMO?

Envíe su nombre y número
telefónico al siguiente email.
eruizgut@d51schools.org
Llame al 970-254-5500 ext. 14133

Escanee aquí
para
registrarse



Home Loan Taste of the Grand Valley

"Samples & Sips"

Fri, April 7, 2023 03:00 PM - 07:00 PM
530 Colorado Ave, Grand Junction, CO 81501, USA



The 2023 Home Loan Taste of the Grand Valley "Samples & Sips" event will be an outdoor food and beverage festival, held in the 500 block of Colorado Ave. parking lot. Come enjoy delicious samples from eight local food trucks, tasty sips from local wineries and breweries, live music, and more. All proceeds benefit the 43 local nonprofit programs that United Way of Mesa County helps support!



Tickets

\$20 now through April 6th

\$25 day-of event/at gate

Check out the awesome vendors that will be there, and more still to come!

We'd like to say a huge thank you to our event sponsors. Check out more info on our title sponsor, [Home Loan Insurance!](#)



Want to sponsor this event? Email us at taste@uwmesacounty.org, we would love to have your involvement!

CAGT Happenings



Conversations With CAGT

1st and 3rd Tuesdays each month at 5:00 pm MST on [Facebook Live](#)

Conversations with CAGT is back with an all-new season of timely, relevant topics by preeminent local, national, and international specialists in the field of gifted education! CWC has a new format this season with programs premiering on the **first and third Tuesdays of the month** at 5:00 pm MST on Facebook Live. [Check out past Conversations with CAGT programs on our website](#), where you may rewatch experts anytime, including Linda Silverman, Jim Delisle, Julie Skolnick, Jonathan Mooney, Joy Lawson Davis, Jaime Castellano, and many others. *Conversations with CAGT* is an incredible opportunity to get expert advice on topics regarding giftedness for FREE with time to ask your questions. The best part is that as a CAGT member your questions get priority! Join us on the **first and third Tuesdays of the month** at 5:00 pm MST on [Facebook Live](#)!

Tuesday, April 4th: Jennifer Harvey Sallin

"Discovering One's Giftedness as an Adult"

Tuesday, April 18th: Tracy Inman

Visit our website for details!

Every Kid Outdoors Program

Fourth graders and their families receive free access to public lands

Ongoing until year 2025

[Click here for more information](#)

[Visit our website](#) for upcoming "Conversations" and to view past sessions!

Rocky Mountain PBS



Josh Rafail has been attending Circle of Fathers support group meetings for over a year. According to Rafail, he has found immense support as he navigates fatherhood.

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Adam Combs hadn't anticipated being a father. But when he found out his daughter was on the way, the news changed his life.

"It really kind of shifted my gears on, you know, who I want to be and my purpose ... It just gives you a greater sense of purpose to be a dad, you know, and just totally changes your whole mindset and your friendship groups and everything," he said.

As Combs navigated the legal system while negotiating a custody agreement for his daughter, he found that there were limited resources available for fathers and male caregivers in similar shoes. Wanting to help support fathers and male caregivers, he started training to be a facilitator.



Adam Combs is a facilitator for the Circle of Fathers support group in Colorado Springs. *Photo courtesy of Adam Combs.*

Now, Combs is one of two facilitators for the [Circle of Fathers](#) support group. The framework for the group is part of [The Circle of Parents](#) national program, which offers peer support groups for anyone in a parenting and/or caregiving role.

[Illuminate Colorado](#), a statewide organization that develops programs, policies and initiatives aimed to prevent child maltreatment, leads the state chapter of Circle of Parents in Colorado. Josh Rafail, who has been a part of the group for over a year, told Rocky Mountain PBS that learning food was provided during meetings was one of the factors that helped convince him to attend a meeting, but the community and support he found during a difficult time in his life was what made him stay.

“I would say I was in a fairly broken place when I first joined, and now I just feel a sense of self love and optimism for my daughter and our relationship and our future that I never felt before ... it's a very rewarding and valuable experience,” Rafail said.

Child care is also available during the support group meeting. According to Combs, children can participate in Children's Circle, where they do skill-building activities related to social-emotional development while their fathers are having a meeting.

He shared that the the lessons taught in Children's Circle are sometimes also discussed in Circle of Fathers meetings. The topics provide opportunities for a parent and child to talk and learn together during their car ride home.

“Sometimes us adults need to learn about anger management or how to make a friend, you know?” Combs said.

The Children's Circle space, where kids participate in skill-building activities related to social-emotional development while their fathers and male caregivers are in Circle of Fathers meetings. Outside of meetings, the group also has outings and fireside chats — events where experts come in and provide information to the group about various topics such as navigating custody issues in court.

Rafail added that he has seen fathers and male caregivers vocalize needing support in numerous topics, like navigating co-parenting, logical discipline and how to care for young children. Conversations during meetings are group-led.

“We try to hone it in and try to keep it back to being child centered,” Combs said. “And how is this going to affect your life and your child, and what things can we improve upon that?”

Rafail reflected on a time when the plumbing in his house went out. Though he was frustrated and worried, the other men in the group reminded him that he didn't need to solve the problem on his own — he could work together with his family to solve the problem together.

“I found that really insightful because it involves my kids in a way that makes them feel empowered, but also makes me feel like I'm not on my own with this,” Rafail said.

For him, one of the biggest benefits of having a space for men to practice vulnerability and non-judgement with each other is that it also helps them practice vulnerability with their significant others and children.

“There are many men who are walking in the same way, like, ‘What am I supposed to do? I just want to love my daughter and have a good relationship with them or my child,’” Rafail said.

D51 Gifted & Talented Department



*2768 Compass Drive, Suite 200
Grand Junction, CO 81506*

Heather Baskin - D51 GT Director

Brandy Headlee - D51 GT Coach

Summer Allen - D51 GT Administrative Assistant

(970) 254-6903

Summer.Allen@D51Schools.org



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