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## Mountainfilm reaches into classrooms

*Film program snags grant from state*

By Matthew Beaudin  
Editor

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A festival with roots in old vans and the crags of the western hemisphere keeps growing up. And out.

"Making Movies that Matter," a Mountainfilm program that allows students to re-edit documentary films into their own shorts, won a grant from the Colorado Council on the Arts, adding more money to a program that's already farmed successes in Santa Fe, Seattle, Telluride and Ridgway.

By heading into middle and high school classrooms, Mountainfilm could be waking up the next great documentary mind or unearthing the very person who may go on to fight any of the world's environmental issues, from water in the West to the extinction crisis.

"What it really does is provide great validation and endorsement of the program," said Mountainfilm Executive Director Peter Kenworthy. "It gets us excited that we're doing something that has resonance with the arts community in the state."

The program collected a \$5,000 grant in what can only be described as a harsh climate for non-profits, as grants become scarce. Mountainfilm was awarded the money based on its "relevance, excellent teacher materials, strong implementation capacity, high quality of film artists and its impact on kids," according to the CCA grant selection committee report. It costs about \$25,000 to run each year.

"Making Movies that Matter" is penned for middle and high school students and comes free of charge — they use Mountainfilm documentaries and learn how to edit video.

First, students learn about the environmental and political issues by watching a film, then they rip into it and focus on the elements they found moving. They'll insert voiceovers, add music (and learn about music rights in the process) and make other editorial decisions. At the end of the two-week program they come out with a short usually no longer than four or so minutes. The very best films are screened at Mountainfilm and their makers brought out to Telluride.

"Our program reinforces core curriculum in a way that resonates particularly well with this age group," said Mountainfilm's Education Director Ellen Shelton in a press release. "At a critical juncture in their intellectual development, our program helps students make sense of the image-charged media they experience on a daily basis. And it gives them practical tools to make meaningful contributions to that media."

Kenworthy agrees: "They come up with some incredible creations," he said. "They figure out what compelled them the most."

The program launched in the spring of 2008 in the Ridway and Ouray school districts. Two teachers and 20 students played guinea pig for a program that has taken flight; just a year later, Shelton worked with seven teachers and 80 students in Seattle, Santa Fe, Denver, Washington, DC as well as the Telluride region.

She plans to continue expansion of the program locally and nationwide over the coming year and will start by training several teachers at a new technology-based charter school in Denver.

"I think it's very important," Kenworthy said. "Education is a central tenant of our mission."

To learn more about Making Movies that Matter, contact Ellen Shelton at [ellen@mountainfilm.org](mailto:ellen@mountainfilm.org).

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