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238 Young Chautauquas bring history to life with school project

Ten-year-old Ty Clifford hooked his thumbs into blue suspenders and rocked back and forth on his heels with a 10-gallon cowboy hat perched on his head.

When he opened his mouth, a confident John Otto, founder of the Colorado National Monument, spun yarns about his first love and his two donkeys, Foxey and Cookie.

"I love the monument with my whole life," said Otto, who described how his efforts to establish the park landed him

By CASSIE HEWLINGS

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in jail for being a nuisance to Colorado's governor.

It's almost like stumbling into a living, breathing history book. But then again, that's exactly what the Young Chautauquas strive for. The part acting, part

historical preservation group hails from several schools in District 51 and chose historical figures to research and then present their stories in the first person and in period outfits.

"I love this kind of learning," said Susan Hall, a teacher at Wingate Elementary and the director of the chautauquas program. "The idea of the chautauqua is that they used to be traveling speakers to rural areas that didn't have entertainment."

The kids in the program don't travel much farther than the Grand Junction area to perform, but they will be featured today at the Apple Jubilee at the Cross Orchards Living History Farm.

"It's a huge commitment," said 12-year-old Zach Lamberty who portrays Oskar Schindler.

"I practice my whole 30-minute speech every night."

Each chautauqua begins with a school project in which the students pick and research historical figures, Hall said. The kids are invited to stay with the group after the assignment and continue to develop their character for performances.

Ty said he had never heard of Otto before starting his project two years ago.

"Now, I'm 95 percent sure I know everything about John Otto," he said.

Nerves don't really bother her anymore, said Isa Kohls, who portrays political activist Josephine Roche, because speaking in first-person helps her own her character.

"I get more excited," she said. "But when the crowd grows, so do my nerves."

MAKE WAY FOR 'IKE'

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Gen. Dwight D. "Ike" Eisenhower, portrayed by actor Ken Hammontree, strides into the Veterans Affairs Medical Center on Friday. His entrance promoted the Two Rivers Chatauqua and Apple Jubilee today at Cross Orchards Living History Farm. **LEFT PHOTO:** First lady Eleanor Roosevelt – Susan Marie Frontczak – talks with veteran James Harris of Grand Junction.

Photos by **GRETEL DAUGHERTY**
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Two Rivers Chautauqua and Apple Jubilee,
Cross Orchards Historic Site, 3073 F Road,
10 a.m.-5 p.m., arts and crafts vendors, food,
hayrides, apple pressing, homemade apple
butter, historic demonstrations/lectures
and activities, music, Chautauquan speak-
ers 6:30 and 7:45 p.m., free admission
to Cross Orchards, 242-0971, 434-9814,
www.wcmuseum.org.

The Bud Light Colorado Park and More