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## **Flagstaff Academy Students Shine at Statewide Microplastics Summit Young Environmental Leaders Share Research and Inspire Action**

**April 30, 2025 - LONGMONT, CO** – Flagstaff Academy Charter School’s Green Team students presented at the 2025 Colorado Microplastics Summit, hosted by the Ocean First Institute in Denver. Sixteen student members, along with four staff advisors, attended the summit to present original research on the presence and impact of microplastics in local ecosystems.

Green Team members hosted an interactive booth that featured a research display board, functioning microscopes for examining filtered water samples, and a student-produced slideshow documenting their work. Their exhibit drew attention from attendees of all ages, including scientists, educators, and environmental advocates.

“The Green Team spent weeks researching, experimenting, and preparing their booth for the summit,” said Ms. Ralston, Flagstaff Academy 3rd grade teacher and Green Team advisor. “I was so proud to see our students confidently and passionately inform adults on the issues they care so much about.”

The relationship between Flagstaff Academy’s Green Team and the Ocean First Institute began last fall when elementary science teacher, Stacy Wolff, attended Educator Night at the Butterfly Pavilion and learned about the Institute’s free environmental education programs. Inspired, she proposed a mini-series on microplastics to Green Team student leaders and staff advisors. The students enthusiastically agreed and began collecting water samples from around Longmont, as well as snowfall from the nearby mountains.

In December, a representative from the Ocean First Institute visited the Green Team, taught students how to filter samples and analyze them for microplastics, and inspired the group to take their learning even further. The students wrote letters to Governor Jared Polis and the Longmont City Council advocating for greater awareness and action around plastic pollution. Impressed by their dedication, the Institute invited Flagstaff Academy’s Green Team to present at the summit.

### **Student Takeaways from the Summit**

The experience had a lasting impact on the students, who left the event with new knowledge, ideas, and a stronger sense of purpose.

“I learned that nylon and other types of fabrics are actually bad for your skin because of the plastic,” said 4th grade Green Team member Maddie. “I learned the importance of having accessible materials for testing for microplastics worldwide and how much of an impact Ocean First is making,” added 8th grader, Ella. “Even though we can’t stop making microplastics, we can try to slow it down until we find a solution to reduce the amount of them,” stated 5th grader Quinn.

The summit covered key topics including the definition of microplastics, their primary sources (such as synthetic fabrics and packaging), and practical strategies to reduce plastic pollution. Presenters emphasized the importance of making environmentally conscious purchasing decisions and highlighted that while no one can be perfect, awareness and individual action are critical first steps.

“I am incredibly proud of our members of the Green Team for dedicating their time to learning about an important topic in society and their interest in sharing their knowledge with others,” said Ms. Wolff. “They took this project to the next level by presenting their work at the Microplastics Summit.”

The Green Team plans to continue its advocacy work this spring by organizing a "Plastic-Free Lunch Challenge" at Flagstaff Academy and sharing their findings with local officials.

### **About Flagstaff Academy:**

Flagstaff Academy is a preschool through eighth grade public charter school located in Longmont, CO. Flagstaff Academy is now in its nineteenth year of operation, serving approximately 800 students and employing nearly 95 faculty and staff.

The school’s mission is to “develop students who are equipped to be well-rounded, ethical leaders in the world community with a foundation based on science and technology.” The school’s curriculum is rich with experiential arts, hands-on science exploration, character education, and innovative technology integration. Learn more at [www.flagstaffacademy.org](http://www.flagstaffacademy.org).

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Photo Caption: 5th grade student and Green Team member, Kavya N. presents research at the at the 2025 Colorado Microplastics Summit hosted by the Ocean First Institute.

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