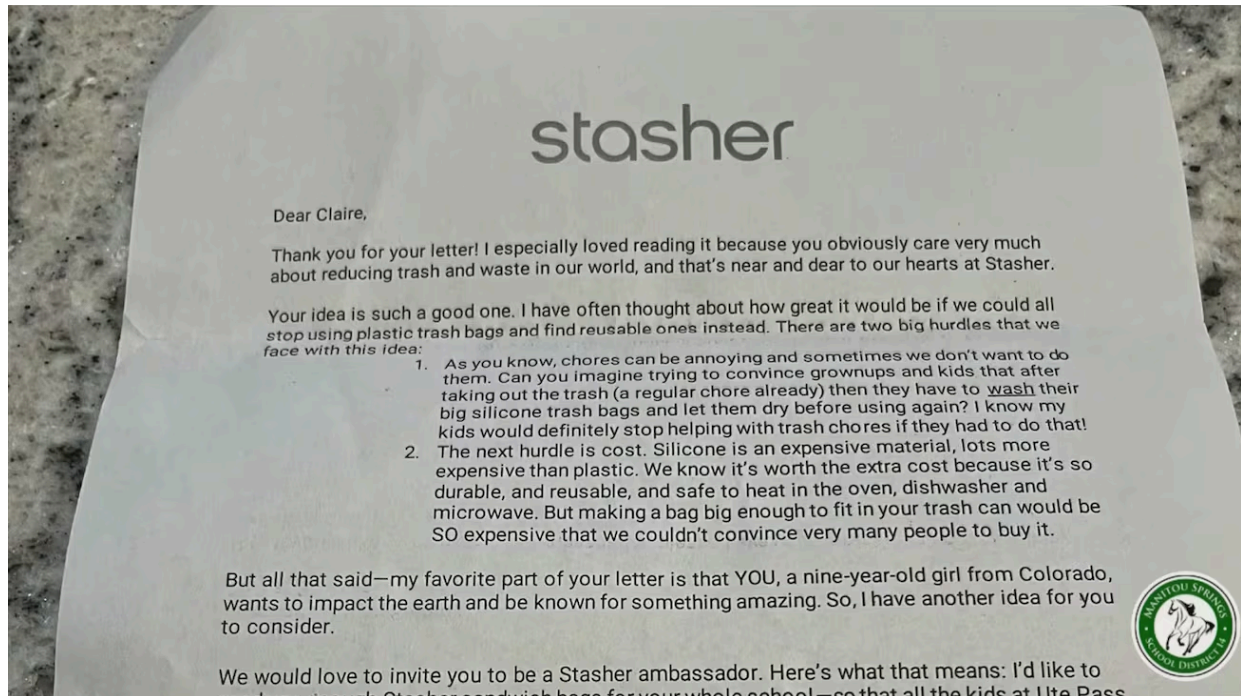


# Little girl, big difference: 4th grader's idea helps reduce trash at Pikes Peak region-area elementary school

By: Lindsey Grewe

*Adapted by Fishtank Staff*

- 1 CASCADE, Colo. (KKTV)—A local little girl is making a big impact on the environment!
- 2 Claire is a fourth grader at Ute Pass Elementary School in Cascade. Last fall, she took part in a letter-writing assignment with the rest of her class.
- 3 "Back in October, they were tasked with writing persuasive letters," said school principal Jackie Powell. "And a lot of students wrote home to get new pets, some of them even wrote me as their principal to get a slide off the roof into a ball pit and some crazy ideas. But Claire went a different direction, and we're really proud of this direction that she went."
- 4 Claire reached out to a company that makes reusable sandwich bags—with a proposal.
- 5 "I wrote my persuasive letter to the company called Stasher to try and persuade them to make a reusable trash bag," Claire told 11 News reporter Lindsey Grewe.
- 6 The kids walked a whole mile to the Green Mountain Falls post office and sent off their letters. Claire said it was her first time ever mailing a handwritten letter. To her surprise, a month later she actually heard back.
- 7 **Grewe:** "What were you expecting? Did you expect to hear back?"
- 8 **Claire:** "No, not really."
- 9 Stasher's CEO told Claire that while they couldn't make the reusable trash bags she hoped for, they were so impressed with her and how much she cared about the environment at such a young age, that they had another suggestion.



A portion of the letter Claire received from the company, courtesy of Ute Pass Elementary School. (Manitou Springs District 14)

- 10 "Because the silicone that they use is really expensive, they couldn't. So what they did instead is made me an ambassador and sent a Stasher bag to every student in the school," Claire said.
- 11 Claire said she cried happy tears after reading her letter.
- 12 And sure enough, soon after, several boxes of Stasher snack bags arrived at the school.
- 13 "Me and Mrs. Powell and some other people went around the school and passed them out," Claire said.
- 14 Powell said she noticed Claire made a difference right away.
- 15 **Jackie Powell:** "As soon as Claire went around, the very next day we saw most of our students using Stasher bags, wouldn't you say?"
- 16 **Claire:** "Yeah."
- 17 "A lot of them brought their sandwiches or their snacks for the day, and because of that, our trash cans are emptier, which is a really great thing for our school. We're looking at reducing waste any way that we can."
- 18 Ute Pass Elementary School is actually the only school in the country with a "Leave No Trace" program youth accreditation, so Claire's accomplishment fits right into the school goal's of creating environmental stewards.

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<https://www.kktv.com/2023/03/03/little-girl-big-difference-4th-graders-idea-helps-reduce-trash-pikes-peak-region-area-elementary-school/>. Reprinted with permission.

- 19 "We're just really big at Ute Pass at fostering student voice and letting them have an opinion and a say on their education, and I think Claire's a really good example of what can happen when you give students a chance to have a view and to write and to persuade and we're just really proud of her," Powell said.
- 20 The school hopes to continue Claire's legacy for years to come by continuing to encourage all of its students to trade plastic snack bags for reusable ones. Claire says the bags she gave her classmates are sturdy enough to last them until high school and beyond!
- 21 "I think that's the important part of this process, is that although they're 9 and 10 years old, they have big voices and can impact change on our environment and all sorts of ways," Powell said.
- 22 "You don't have to be an adult to make a difference in the world," Claire added.