

# Colorado Shakespeare Festival to perform in all 64 counties by 2028

By Michelle Karas , Features Reporter/Special Sections Editor

Colorado Springs Gazette

Young audience members ask questions after a "Twelfth Night" performance by Colorado Shakespeare Festival actors. The festival announced Friday that it will bring live performances to schools and theater groups in all 64 Colorado counties by 2028 with funding from the \$3.2 million Shakespeare Across Colorado initiative.

The Colorado Shakespeare festival was founded in 1958 in association with the University of Colorado at Boulder. An outdoor summer Shakespeare performance is pictured on the campus.

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival has called Boulder home for more than six decades, but now it will come to every Colorado county.

Live performances will be brought to all 64 counties by 2028 through the \$3.2 million Shakespeare Across Colorado initiative, the festival announced Friday.

That will bring the Bard's universal lessons to an estimated 180,000 people in schools, theaters and other venues, said Amanda Giguere, the festival's outreach director.

"We've had a great track record of reaching schools on the Front Range. We'll take the next 10 years to continue to reach the schools we're reaching as well as other communities throughout the state," Giguere said.

"While 64 counties does sound like a lot, we've intentionally made it very doable. We're not touring with a company of 25 actors. We're touring with one van, three actors and a stage manager and maybe some understudies. And we're performing abridged versions of plays, not full productions. We've made it very nimble."

The plan will be funded through grants, sponsorships and donations that will support artists' wages, travel expenses and equipment.

The professional theater company, associated with the University of Colorado at Boulder, will continue to perform full-length plays on the campus. This summer marks the festival's 62nd year, with performances of "Twelfth Night," "As You Like It" and "Romeo and Juliet" offered in June, July and August. It's recognized as one of the nation's oldest Shakespeare festivals.

It's Shakespeare Across Colorado programming will continue school visits through the Shakespeare & Violence Prevention program, which has reached nearly 100,000 students in 264 schools. That program, founded in 2011 with the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, uses research and shortened Shakespeare performances to teach students in elementary through high school about bullying, empathy, teamwork and "upstander behavior," Giguere said.

This week, Colorado Shakespeare Festival actors will perform in Glenwood Springs schools and at a free evening community event in Basalt.

"We're hoping people will come out who've never seen Shakespeare before," Giguere said. "The reason we're doing abridged versions of the plays is it's a really nice on-ramp to Shakespeare and a way to engage the community through the lens of violence prevention. And it's also very easy to fit into a school day."

Students learn the lessons and language of Shakespeare and violence intervention strategies. After an abbreviated version of, for instance, "Twelfth Night" (for children below sixth grade) or "Macbeth" (for middle or high school students), the actors hold workshops to help students "consider the world from someone else's shoes and then connect situations in the play to situations they face every day. Students can step into the shoes of characters from the play and role-play solutions," she said.

In "Macbeth," the title character becomes convinced he needs to kill the king so he can become king. "We ask the kids, 'What could you do to persuade Macbeth to do the right thing here and get him to logically think through the consequences?'"

Studies have shown that learning Shakespeare improves language skills, increases student engagement and explains competing world views.

"Shakespeare's characters are written so convincingly that students can see the world from their perspectives," Giguere said.

"Through the role-play, we give the kids the power to shape the narrative, and they come up with brilliant solutions, like talking through the situation with Macbeth or reaching out to a trusted adult. It shows them there are so many ways to be an upstander, even helping anonymously, like by calling the [Safe2Tell hotline](#), or through direct intervention. It's just really important to use their voices."

This school year, the tour has stopped in 12 counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Douglas, Denver, Eagle, Garfield, Gunnison, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld. Shakespeare Across Colorado will visit the remaining counties in seven- to 10-day tours, Giguere said.

"For now, we'll just work really hard writing a lot of grants. Now that we've announced this goal, we're looking at where to find funding year by year."

To donate to Shakespeare Across Colorado or the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, visit [cupresents.org](http://cupresents.org).

Contact the writer, 476-1602.



Young audience members ask questions after a “Twelfth Night” performance by Colorado Shakespeare Festival actors.