As this edition of our Newsletter goes to press, we are excited to announce that “Punt the Creek” will offer a variety of improvements for our passengers’ enjoyment during this 3rd summer of operation.

Over the course of the last several months, L&M Enterprises has been working aggressively within the channel and along the banks of Cherry Creek, constructing numerous additions to this exciting amenity in Lower Downtown Denver which have been designed through the cooperative efforts of MDG, Inc. and Recreational Engineering and Planning.

As of Memorial Day weekend, passengers will enjoy an additional two blocks of boatable Creek, including a new dam and lock at Market St., an improved and enhanced lock at Wazee St., and an extension of the pedestrian path within the walls of the Creek, including a new access ramp at Delgany St. In addition, a cooperative effort between the Greenway Foundation and Denver Parks and Recreation will result in a widened bicycle/rollerblade path between Market St. and Delgany St. A variety of landscaping enhancements will also be installed throughout the summer months.

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Passengers on these gondola-like vessels (the only known punts in the United States) will be able to board at Creekfront Plaza off of Larimer St. and Speer Blvd., and be escorted downstream along six blocks of the Creek through two locks to Delgany St. and back, courtesy of a punt guide who is well versed in the background of this historic section of Denver. The 45 minute excursion is enjoyable for individuals and groups of all ages, and is a great way to begin or conclude your afternoon or evening in LoDo.

These latest improvements to “Punt the Creek” have been made possible through the support of the City and County of Denver, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, the Gates, El Pomar and Quick Foundations, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Trillium Corporation and numerous other organizational and individual contributors. Design and funding efforts are underway to complete “Punt the Creek” between Delgany St. and Confluence Park over the next year. The additional improvements will include two more dams, another lock, the extension of the pedestrian path to where it will connect with the South Platte River Greenway trail system and additional landscaping improvements throughout the Creek channel and surrounding areas.

Come and boat “Punt the Creek” this summer! It’s a great way to experience the birthplace of Denver!

Phase II of “Punt the Creek” is underway and will be completed for the 1998 season. This new lock at Market Street will allow the Creek to be “puntable” for an additional two blocks.
For the third consecutive year, the Greenway Foundation and the Mayor's South Platte River Commission joined forces to produce and oversee a variety of programs and efforts to enhance the South Platte River Greenway. The foundation is pleased to have the opportunity to be involved with Mayor Webb's goal of enhancing and expanding the environmental and recreational potential of Denver's Greatest Natural Resource.

The Ranger program was expanded during 1997 to allow our crew supervisor to work part time during the non-summer months. A major focus of our Supervisor's time was spent patrolling the various waterways, along with the adjacent trails and parks, as well as working with the various Denver Parks crews to help maintain and improve these important amenities. The Ranger program is in place for the 1998 season.

South Platte River Rendezvous

On August 22nd and 23rd, the Greenway Foundation joined with the Mayor's South Platte River Commission to launch the "South Platte River Rendezvous," a 2-day event that combined recognition for recent improvements on the Riverfront with a Founder's Day theme at the actual birthplace.

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River Ranger Program

The South Platte River Ranger program enjoyed another productive season. Working in cooperation with Denver Parks and Recreation and the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, this innovative summertime youth employment program accomplished numerous projects to add to the beauty of the South Platte River Greenway.

The eight person high school aged crew traveled up and down the South Platte River and Cherry Creek Greenways on foot and via bicycles which tow a specially designed cart that holds a variety of landscaping and maintenance equipment. The Rangers swept the various trails along the River and its tributaries, picked up litter and debris, mowed and edged areas adjacent to the trails, and were involved in numerous landscaping projects along the banks of the waterways. Graffiti removal and overpainting was also a regular part of a work day. In addition, the Ranger Crew assisted with a variety of special events produced by the Greenway Foundation which are listed within this article.

Mayor Wellington Webb and Denver's First Lady, Wilma Webb, enjoyed a stagecoach ride from City Hall to the South Platte River Rendezvous, courtesy of Wells Fargo Bank, one of the event sponsors.
Denver. The event was co-sponsored by MCI, Wells Fargo, Frontier Airlines, the Rocky Mountain News and KCKK-FM. Despite a rainy start, over 2,500 people came down to Centennial Park (dedicated 5 days earlier) to partake in the festivities.

Mark your calendars for the second installment of the *Rendezvous* for 1998 on Saturday and Sunday, June 6-7, at Centennial Park (just north of Elitch Gardens.) We are happy to announce the addition of Denver Public Schools, Colorado Parent Magazine, King Soopers and Elitch Gardens as sponsors. DPS has also chosen the *Rendezvous* to recognize over 1,200 of their volunteers. Denver families will experience the sights, sounds and tastes of Denver City in the 1860’s. Our goal is to provide fun, interactive entertainment for the entire family, while helping to promote the Riverfront. Admission for the event is free.

Outdoor Education/Wildlife Excursions

Through the cooperative efforts of the South Platte River Commission, the Greenway Foundation, the River Heritage Society and the River Ranger Program, scores of elementary and middle school aged youth enjoyed a fun and educational excursion along the South Platte River.

During June, July and August, eight outdoor education/wildlife excursions were held. During the course of each excursion, 80-100 young people learned about Denver’s historic ties to the South Platte, experienced the challenge of gold panning, traveled down the River on a white water raft, and learned about a variety of plant, insect and animal species that exist up and down the River in Denver. The Foundation’s appreciation goes out to all of the educators and counselors that made these special days such a success. This program will be continued in 1998.

South Platte River Clubs

Under the extremely capable guidance of Carl Crookham, the “guru” of education on the South Platte River, each of the DPS middle schools have established an after-school South Platte River Club as part of Mayor Webb’s Club Denver program. A faculty member at each school serves as the Club sponsor, planning and overseeing a variety of River related activities that take place at the host school, as well as on the River. The sponsors assist Club members as they learn about the South Platte’s significance to our City’s history and future, the wide variety of future professional opportunities connected with the River, and numerous other activities that help connect the River to the student’s middle school curriculum.

Now in its second year, efforts to connect the South Platte and its tributaries to the classroom are expanding into the elementary and high school levels. The Platte River Club concept is being used around the state and beyond as a successful and beneficial example of cooperative interaction between school districts and their respective municipalities.

Additional information regarding this exciting program can be found on the following page of this Newsletter.
Our long time supporters will remember that the Greenway Foundation became the primary sponsor of the Greenway Experience in the late 1970's. Now that this unique indoor/outdoor learning experience is back, stronger and better than ever, the Foundation felt that an overview of the program might be of interest.

The Greenway Experience, created by Carl Crookham, is an internationally recognized program that focuses on dropouts and at-risk urban students, rekindling their interest in high school graduation as they are trained to become history/environmental science tour guides. Spanning over 25 years, more than 300 teen guides have conducted half-day and full-day tours of the South Platte River Greenway to over 65,000 children and adults. By building self-esteem and generating an excitement for learning, the Greenway Experience has achieved an 80% graduation rate amongst the teen guides, who credit their desire to complete their high school degree directly to being involved as guides for The Greenway Experience. This success of the program has brought Carl and The Greenway Experience local, state and national recognition.

Over the years, The Greenway Experience has expanded and improved to include school districts throughout the Denver Metro area as well as other parts of the United States. Carl has consulted with educators in several states throughout the northwest part of the Country and hosted a group of Japanese teachers and businessmen on a tour of the River with an overview of The Greenway Experience. In 1992, Carl was a featured presenter at the first world conference on environmental education, known as Eco-Ed. Educators from over 60 countries attend the conference and Carl had the opportunity to present a history and overview of The Greenway Experience on four occasions during the conference.

In 1996, as part of Mayor’s Webb’s “Year of the River” agenda, Carl was put on special assignment with Denver Public Schools to serve as the Education Coordinator of the South Platte River Commission’s goal to implement River related education programs at all levels of the K-12 agenda. The first step was the creation of the Platte River Clubs in the middle schools as part of Mayor’s Webb “Club Denver” program, created to offer positive after-school options for middle school aged teens. Within the first two months of the 1996-97 school year, Carl recruited a member of faculty to serve as a Club Sponsor at each of the 18 DPS middle schools. Now in its second year, these dedicated educators have introduced over 500 young people to the South Platte River Greenway.

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In early 1998, the return of The Greenway Experience has been added to this multi-faceted, multi-age effort and will once again feature at-risk teens as the tour guides. The guides will introduce elementary school children to the exciting history, ecology and recreation possibilities of the South Platte River through a four-park tour of the River. The 4th and 5th grade students will enjoy a specially designed workbook that connects the River to various curriculums including environmental science, history, creative writing, spelling and more. Carl Crookham’s lifelong dedication to this important educational effort, known as SPREE (South Platte River Environmental Education), has brought him and the program many well deserved accolades from around the Country.

The future of the South Platte River Greenway depends on the care it will receive from today’s young people. The Greenway Foundation is grateful to Carl and Mayor Webb’s South Platte River Commission for their ongoing commitment to helping these young people realize the role the River continues to play in the strengthening of our City.
Cherry Creek South Greenway
A Multi-Jurisdictional Partnership
by Dean Pearson-MDG, Inc.

Stakeholders from various municipalities and agencies attended a Cherry Creek Greenway update meeting in December 1997. The following is a summary of the results of that meeting.

Colorado State Parks

The Castlewood Canyon State Park and Cherry Creek State Park portions of the trail have been completed. Colorado State Parks continues to upgrade and improve the existing trail system within the State Parks.

City of Aurora

The City of Aurora is still negotiating trail easements with landowners. They do not anticipate constructing any trail in 1998.

Arapahoe County

Arapahoe County plans to build a .75 mile portion of the trail in 1998. They are continuing to work towards acquiring easements and rights-of-way for the remainder of the trail in Arapahoe County.

Town of Parker

The trail is complete through the Town of Parker. The Town continues to make connections to the Cherry Creek Greenway. The Sulphur Gulch Trail is currently being constructed which will connect to Bar CCC Park. The Town plans to construct the Tallman Gulch Trail in 1998 and a trail along Newlin Gulch in the future.

Douglas County

Douglas County began construction on a .5 mile portion of the trail in December 1997. When completed, this portion of trail will connect the Pinery Connector to Scott Road. This section of the trail includes one eighty-four foot span prefabricated pedestrian bridge. Negotiations with landowners continue. Douglas County continues to work with landowners to obtain easements for the rest of the trail. They hope to also construct a 1.6 mile section of the trail near the McLean Pit. The County is also working to develop uniform signage standards for the trail system.

By the end of 1998, approximately 20 of the 24 miles of the Cherry Creek Greenway will be completed. All the above municipalities and agencies have set a target completion date for the entire Cherry Creek Greenway within the year 2000.
I am pleased to report to you all we have accomplished as we celebrate the midpoint of the South Platte Corridor Project. Thanks to the efforts of many people, we have completed or have underway more than 20 projects and programs to improve the river corridor and the ways in which Denver citizens may enjoy it.

In 1996, Great Outdoors Colorado, the state lottery program dedicated to parks and open space, awarded us one of the largest grants in their history to help implement our project. The nearly $7 million GoCo has committed to our efforts have helped us leverage more than $20 million in additional funds.

In 1997, we received the “Deal of the Year” award from the Denver Business Journal for our success in accomplishing an acquisition that was first imagined by our forefathers a hundred years ago. It took many ingredients coming together in 1996 to finally get the job done. These included the leadership and support of City Council and a far-sighted business community dedicated to making Denver a great city to work and live.

Denver City Council, members of my South Platte River Commission, neighborhood representatives and river advocates joined me recently for the Commons Park groundbreaking ceremony that marked the beginning of park construction. When complete, Commons Park will add 30 acres of parkland to downtown and will serve Highland and Downtown neighborhoods along with citywide users.

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In 1997, the U.S. Conference of Mayors awarded Denver first place in the City Livability competition. The City Livability award specifically recognized our innovative Club Denver program established in all of Denver’s 18 middle schools. The Platte River after school clubs were the first of the Club Denver programs to be established. The Clubs, funded in large part by Great Outdoors Colorado and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, have provided young people, many of whom have never been outside of the city, an important environmental outdoor experience in Denver. This program will instill in youth a sense of stewardship and a connection to one of our most important regional assets, the South Platte River. Through this and other youth programs, over 1,000 Denver area youth have visited the South Platte River.

In June of this past year, we were invited to Washington to accept the Gold award from American Rivers, a national river advocacy organization. This award recognizes our project for excellence in our parks, natural areas, and youth programs. Additionally, Denver has been visited by representatives of numerous cities around the nation who are interested in replicating our successes.

I believe that if we protect and care for our River and help restore its beauty, the South Platte will bring our children and theirs unmatched recreational, educational, and development opportunities for years to come. I would invite you all to come down to the river and experience for yourself the many new projects that have enhanced our River. I look forward to joining you in enjoying these improvements.

▲ Overland neighborhood residents take a hit at the road that has separated their neighborhood from the South Platte. The road will be removed and the park will be expanded to the banks of the River.
Elitch Gardens is located on 50 acres in the picturesque Central Platte River Valley near the heart of dynamic Downtown Denver. With more than 40 rides and attractions, Elitch Gardens has something for everyone. In 1997 Elitch Gardens added more than $30 million in new thrilling fun, including a $10 million monster steel roller coaster and a 220-foot tall giant drop. And don’t miss Island Kingdom, the beautiful water adventure park, open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Island Kingdom is included in your general admission price-- it’s like two parks in one! Look for the addition of StarToon Studios in June of 1998, a $4 million pint-sized playland for kids and parents to play the day away.

Elitch Gardens enjoys a storied past that began in 1890 when John and Mary Elitch turned a small apple orchard on the outskirts of Denver into picnic areas and ball fields. The Park later boasted Denver’s first zoo, and a summer stock theater which hosted such luminaries as Sarah Bernhardt, Cecil B. DeMille, Grace Kelly and Edward G. Robinson. The famous Trocadero Ballroom was later added, and attracted all the famous big bands of the time.

After many years and many changes, Elitch Gardens moved to its new location on the South Platte River. In May of 1995, Elitch Gardens opened its doors on a new location. Changes continued at the Park, including the 1996 purchase by Premier Parks, Inc. With new thrill rides, a water park and a theme built around the history of Elitch Gardens, the Park is a cornerstone of the redevelopment of Downtown Denver. Elitch Gardens has played a vital role in the revitalization of the Central Platte Valley.
The River Heritage Society (RHS) is entering its seventh year of operations in Denver. As we look forward, it is impossible to contain our enthusiasm. Over the years we have had the pleasures of seeing many of the youth that participate in our programs go on to be successful in their endeavors and lives. We have also seen steady growth in the organization itself and are currently expanding our Board of Directors. RHS started with the hope of introducing Denver’s youth to the River and its environment. We quickly grew beyond that to host a year-round program which involves youth in a variety of outdoor activities throughout the watershed area, earning recreational trips by working for their community.

This “earning and learning” component is best displayed by our Project Youth Intervention (PYI). Project Youth Intervention focuses on leadership development for young people from high risk neighborhoods, where too often positive alternatives to drugs, gangs, teenage pregnancy and street violence are scarce. This program is unique in requiring young people to donate community service hours in exchange for the opportunity to participate in a community service project, such as cleaning the River, planting trees, or feeding the homeless, after which they receive a recreational-learning reward in activities such as rafting, skiing, hiking, and snow-shoeing. We at RHS promote public awareness and responsible use of natural resources through these interactive programs which combine opportunities for recreation, environmental education, employment and community service.

While introducing inner-city youth to the River, our rafting operation also doubles as summer commercial rafting enterprise on the South Platte, providing a unique means of ongoing earned income. Platte River Rafting runs 2 hour trips which include a trolley ride and run from Old Colfax to Confluence Park. The trolley picks guests up at Children’s Museum, drops them at the put-in and then delivers them from the take-out back to the meeting point. We also run half and full day trips on the South Platte and Upper Colorado. Youth age 18 and over are trained and employed as river guides to provide historic and environmental perspectives as they conduct trips. Frequently, guides are graduates of PYI and this enterprise provides a funding base for ongoing operations of our nonprofit services. Rafting operations also furnish free recreational outings to reward PYI youth for their community service. Platte River Rafting is a means by which anyone can get a taste of what the South Platte River has to offer. Since inception, Platte River Rafting has rafted over 25,000 people down the South Platte.

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The youth enjoy the rafting, but they feel particularly proud of their community service.

The River Heritage Society is enthusiastic about the numbers of youth we have been able to serve through PYI over the years and the numbers continue to grow. Since inception, we have had over 5,000 youth participate. These youth have provided over 21,000 hours of community service. Last year alone, we were able to serve over 2,000 Denver youth through our community Service for Rafting program. River Heritage Society was also able to employ six river guides, many of whom have participated in our PYI programs.

River Heritage Society had a dynamic year in 1997, culminating in a number of changes and an exciting new outlook. For example, we are implementing a new mobile water testing program with Contemporary Learning Academy Middle School, continuing Project Youth Intervention (PYI), and preparing for another year of inner-city youth employment projects. These 1998 programs hold fantastic possibilities for the participants.

Please bring your family and friends and join us for a trip on the Platte. For more information about River Heritage Society or Platte River Rafting please call us at (303)758-8085 or 477-0379.
Have you heard? The Children’s Museum of Denver is celebrating 25 years of youth! And part of the celebration includes the area’s largest birthday party!

With much more cooked up than cake and ice cream, now is better than ever to experience the fun, laughter and adventure that’s been waiting for you at The Children’s Museum over the past 25 years!

In fact, there’s mammoth festivities in the works for the month of June, with everything planned from A to Z—literally! There’s a whole alphabet soup of special events, guest appearances, family activities and entertainment set at the Museum beginning June 1st and continuing through June 26, 1998. Each of the 26 days of June is assigned a letter of the alphabet beginning with “A” and ending in “Z” on June 26th. And the day’s letter determines the theme and day’s activities.

Other fantastic summer activities at the Museum include Summer Camp for children and their favorite adults. It’s the perfect way to have fun with your child while learning how your child learns through play. Or get the family together for a Rollerblade, ski or snowboard lesson at the Museum’s KidSport. Rollerblade along the Platte River or downhill ski at Kidslope. That’s right, the Museum is the only outdoor ski slope in the area that is operable throughout the summer months, too.

Be on the lookout for the new traveling exhibit, Geo-Zoooom! Moving into Denver this June for a summer tour, this exhibit helps kids explore geography through a child-size world.

And don’t forget about The Children’s Museum for parties of all kinds. Well known for a child’s birthday party, the Museum also offers after-hours party packages for family reunions, company parties, school celebrations, and even 40th birthday parties! Hit the slopes, picnic in the park and play in the exhibits all in one evening.

For a variety of family-fun activities that are educational and experiential, contact The Children’s Museum for a calendar of events at (303) 433-7444. And celebrate another 25 years of magical adventures that foster imagination and curiosity.
Something fishy is going on right in the middle of the City! After six years of planning and fundraising, Colorado’s Ocean Journey has gone from dream to reality. Construction of the Central Valley aquarium began in February 1997 on its 16-acre Water Street site, just North of the Children’s Museum and across the South Platte river from Elitch Gardens.

Many milestones have already been met this year. The administrative staff officially moved its headquarters to the site on Water Street. 95% of the concrete structure and life support has been completed, including the placement of 40% of the acrylic panels needed for the tanks. The facility’s exhibits will hold almost one million gallons of water, which will be filtered every 40 minutes. The doors to this world-class educational facility will open in May of 1999 with a big splash.

Other milestones in the incredible journey include the sale of $57.4 million in revenue bonds in February 1997, and numerous new corporate and community alliances, including a recent $5 million sponsorship from US West. This precedent-setting commitment is the first alliance of its kind within the aquarium industry.

Looking ahead, Colorado’s Ocean Journey will launch its Community Campaign in April 1998. The campaign provides an opportunity to “Own A Piece of the Ocean.” For every donation of $95 or more, your name or that of someone you love will be permanently engraved on a metal water drop which will become part of a magnificent outdoor sculpture. Call (303) 561-4450 for more information.

As in years past, Colorado’s Ocean Journey will once again participate in the annual spring South Platte River Clean Up, scheduled this year for Saturday, May 9, 1998. This will be the sixth year in a row that the aquarium, along with other community and volunteer organizations (such as the Greenway Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Canoe Club and Denver Parks and Recreation) have rallied volunteers to clean up Denver’s principal waterway. Call (303) 964-2517 for more information about this year’s River clean up.

The mission of Colorado’s Ocean Journey is to provide an entertaining educational resource to the Rocky Mountain region and its visitors by showing how oceans affect us locally and nationally, and why water is such a vital resource to Colorado and the surrounding states. This unique facility will immerse visitors in the wonders of water on two journeys, from the Continental Divide to the Sea of Cortez, and from the heights of an Indonesian rainforest to the depths of the Pacific Ocean.
Platte Valley Trolley  
by Mike Heirty

The Platte Valley Trolley will be entering its 10th year of service along the South Platte River.

The Trolley is operated by the Denver Rail Heritage Society and runs along the River between 15th St. and Confluence Park to Decatur St. on a regular schedule. Once per day, a trip to 12th and Sheridan Blvd. is scheduled.

Stops are made along the route at the Forney Museum and Children's Museum. During Bronco Football season, a shuttle service is run between 15th St. and Mile High Stadium.

The open Trolley car, known as a “Breezer”, offers a very enjoyable and slow-paced ride along the River and up through Lakewood Gulch. The track through Lakewood Gulch is that of the Route 84 of the Denver Tramway System which went to Golden at one time. Charters are also available on the trolley for those special occasions. Our Trolley is operated by volunteers who enjoy the opportunity to operate a real streetcar.

If you are interested in helping to operate the car or making a donation to help keep the Trolley operating, please fill out the form below. If you just want to take a unique and enjoyable ride, clip the coupon and come on down.

For more information call Mike Heirty, Platte Valley Trolley at 458-6255.

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For $100.00, have a contribution made towards the Greenway Tree Fund in the name of a friend or loved one. (Also includes all privileges of an Annual Member).

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$250.00 includes a limited edition print by well known artist William Condit entitled Seasons Along the Platte. All prints are signed and numbered by the artist. (Also includes all privileges of an Annual Member).

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