



# Up from the ashes

by Jennaye Derge

In 2002, the Missionary Ridge Fire tore through 73,000 acres of forested land near Durango, swallowing up 56 structures in the process. It devastated local residents and the landscape, to say the least. Though new growth has taken hold in many of the burned areas, there are still noticeable scars. Luckily, Durango has never been known to be an apathetic community. Over the past four years, the San Juan National Forest with the help of numerous local volunteers has stepped up to regenerate the forest with ponderosa pine and Douglas fir seedlings, predominantly along the hills surrounding Vallecito Reservoir. This past week alone, Trails 2000 as well as a group from Columbine Christian School helped give the forest new life – an effort they, their kids and maybe even grandkids will be able to enjoy years from now.



Parent Jackie Chavez assists a group of students through the planting process.



Kindergartner Reagan Wilkinson brings a seedling to its new home.



Third-grader Jesse Powers searches for a good spot



Digging a proper hole is among the first steps to a beautiful forest.