Dreamer Scholars Graduate from High School!

“We’re Going To C-O-L-L-E-G-E!”

On May 16th, 2017, family, friends, teachers, class sponsors, “I Have A Dream” staff, AmeriCorps members, and a community of volunteers and mentors gathered to celebrate our amazing students who graduated high school this year. These 15 graduates have participated in “I Have A Dream’s” year-round, individualized academic and enrichment programming since 2008 and were part of the 60-student Iris Dreamer Scholar Class, which was formed in partnership with Boulder Housing Partners and Boulder Valley School District. The Dreamer Scholars lived in Broadway East and Iris/Hawthorne low-income housing sites in Boulder. The enrollment ages for these students varied and the cohort will be fully graduated in 2018.

The graduation celebration included speeches by Dr. James Hill — Boulder High School Principal, and two graduates — Zair Hoyos and Alexis Martinez. Reflections on the class’ history and a presentation of commencement awards and gifts were made by Iris Program Director Francisco Mejias and CEO Lori Canova. Each of the graduates stepped up to the mic to share about their time as a Dreamer Scholar and where they are headed in the fall — 87% of this year’s high school graduates are headed to college!

Each of these graduates have worked hard over the years, especially as juniors and seniors, as they filled out college applications and submitted scholarship applications with the help of the College and Career Department at “I Have A Dream.” As was promised when they began the program in elementary school, each student will receive a $10,000 tuition-assistance scholarship from the “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County to help support their successful completion of post-secondary education.

“What I’m Most Excited about for College is Starting a Chapter in My Life Which I Have Been Looking Forward To. I’m Excited to Expand My Skills and Knowledge, Which I Will Use to Inspire Younger Siblings and Community Members To Also Attend College One Day.”

-Berenise, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Class of 2021
The “I Have A Dream” program is a long-term, year-round program that works with multiple groups of children from their elementary school years through college. One hundred percent of the Dreamer Scholars are low-income: they either live in low-income housing sites or are eligible for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program at their school. “I Have A Dream” does not cherry pick students. We serve all students in each class, giving each child — regardless of ability — an equal opportunity to reach his or her academic and career potential.

“I Have A Dream” provides more than just academic enrichment to help our students achieve their dreams. We know that relationships and life skills make a crucial difference. We build a bond of trust and advocacy through our Program Directors who support and encourage each Dreamer Scholar’s aspirations. Program Directors work with parents to encourage greater understanding of and support for their child’s academic development and serve as a liaison to teachers, counselors, and community leaders.

Dreamer Scholars are taught at an early age that college or another post-secondary program is not only possible for them, but also an expectation. As they mature, they receive extensive career and college preparation guidance, visit campuses, and are assisted through the application process. Upon high school graduation, students receive a $10,000 tuition-assistance scholarship for college or vocational school.

Since the “I Have A Dream” program began in Boulder County in 1990, over 1,000 students have been served in 18 cohorts. “I Have A Dream” currently serves 530 students from low-income backgrounds in Lafayette, Longmont, Boulder, and Frederick, and supports 70 Dreamer Scholars in post-secondary education.

90% of Dreamer Scholars graduate High School
Compared to 78% of Boulder County’s school districts’ Free & Reduced Lunch students

85% of Dreamer Scholar graduates enter college
Compared to 65% of their Boulder County peers

60% of Dreamer Scholars graduate college
Compared to 48% of Colorado’s low-income students
Since 1990, the “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County has served 1,000 students, and in 2014, along with two of our longest standing partners, Boulder Housing Partners and the Boulder Valley School District, we helped launch the collaborative Dream Big Initiative that will take our impact even further – toward serving all low-income youth in Boulder County in the next two decades.

The Dream Big Initiative brings together these partnerships as well as businesses, government agencies, universities, and other community organizations to work together toward the same outcome: closing Boulder County’s achievement and opportunity gap for low-income youth. Ultimately, the goal of Dream Big will be to expand “I Have A Dream’s” proven, long-term program of serving youth from elementary through college to serve all 16,000 low-income youth in the county’s two school districts. In addition, it will add early education programming through our partners, so that youth and their families are preparing for kindergarten even before their child is walking.

The Dream Big Initiative partners include Boulder Housing Partners, Boulder County, Boulder Valley School District, City of Boulder Parks & Recreation’s Youth Services Initiative, City of Boulder Human Services Family Resource Schools, The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County, El Paso, Foothills United Way, “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County, University of Colorado-Boulder, Workforce Boulder County, and several other nonprofit organizations. This year, the collaboration hired a Dream Big Initiative Project Manager, Katie Scolari Borden, who will be hosted by “I Have A Dream,” and is supported by a Foothills United Way Impact Initiatives multi-year grant.

More information about the Cradle-to-Career projects being implemented through this Dream Big Initiative is available at www.DreamBigBoulderCounty.org.

Pictured on the right: The Dream Big Partners

TOP ROW (left to right) Stuart Thomas, Arrow Performance Group; Karin Stayton, Boulder Housing Partners; Alison Rhodes, City of Boulder Parks and Recreation; Cathie Williamson, “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County; Ron Cabrera, Boulder Valley School District; Joe Mendyka, Foothills United Way; Ann Vaughn, Arrow Performance Group.

BOTTOM ROW (left to right) Rene Brodeur, Boulder Housing Partners; Claudia Sanchez, Dream Big Parent Advisory Committee; Jane McConnell, Community Foundation Serving Boulder County; Lori Canova, “I Have A Dream” Foundation of Boulder County
PARNERING WITH FAMILIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Parents with the Carbon Valley Dreamer Scholar Class in Frederick were invited to attend Nurturing Parents/Criana Con Cariño classes offered in English and Spanish, and loved the classes. Carbon Valley Program Director Aurora Santos said that the parents were so engaged that the classes would regularly run over their two-hour schedule. At the next Parent Meeting, one of the parents was excited to share with the Program Director and other parents how much she was using calming breath techniques — something she’d never heard of before. Aurora is thrilled to see her parents so engaged and was happy that the Dreamer Parent Meeting was filled with thoughtful conversations among the parents.

Partnering with parents is an important part of “I Have A Dream’s” plan for each student to succeed. Each bilingual Program Director establishes ongoing, personalized relationships with all the Dreamer Scholars and their families through individual home visits, parent meetings, and family activities. We also offer parenting classes to help empower parents with tools to help them be supportive and effective parents.

CULTIVATING A LOVE OF READING

Jeff Oliver, a retired teacher serving as an AmeriCorps member at the Aspen Dreamer Scholar Class in Longmont, had been sitting in on a language arts class his students were attending in middle school and realized something important was missing — books! As a book lover himself, he recognized the students were missing out on the joy of reading. So he started a reading program for the Aspen Dreamer Scholars. It started with a library of books the students said they were interested in reading, located in the “I Have A Dream” office at the school. Staff started meeting with small groups of students, giving them the space to do quiet reading together and time to talk about the books. It’s grown from there to include all the students, two overflowing book shelves in the office, and a mobile book cart with picks curated by the staff and some “assistant” librarian Dreamer Scholars, based on books they know their peers are interested in reading.

To further encourage reading over the summer, they created a 1000-page reading challenge. Jeff recounts that one of the Dreamer Scholars, Armando, was short about 200 pages on the last day of summer school, but really wanted to earn the prize — a trip to the local fun center. As a kid who rarely sits still, Jeff was impressed by Armando’s perseverance to sit inside for three hours, reading to complete the challenge.

Reading at grade level is an important measure of our program’s effectiveness and is measured by the school district. Reading programs like the one created by Jeff help improve Dreamer Scholars’ reading skills while allowing them to explore their own interests.
EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO MAKE SMART CHOICES

Every day, “I Have A Dream” staff and volunteers work to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors that impact Dreamer Scholars’ health. Through a partnership with the Healthy Futures Coalition, which is part of Boulder County Public Health’s Community Substance Abuse Prevention Program, Iris Class Dreamer Scholar Betsy was hired to be a student peer advisor.

“Our campaign is called ‘Who We Are,’ and it’s to show middle school students that kids are involved in the community versus doing drugs,” Betsy said. She and her small team started by doing research on community partners and “getting to know what they do and how they help in the community.” Now, after all their hard work, Betsy said, “to see the final product out in the world is really exciting!”

Betsy loves her job. She said some of the best parts have been learning communication skills, such as how to give an “elevator speech.” Betsy also loves that she gets to work in an office setting. “This is really cool, really exciting for me!”

Involvement with the Healthy Futures Coalition is just one facet of “I Have A Dream’s” programming aimed at the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of Dreamer Scholars. Other wellness initiatives include Motivational Interviewing and social emotional skills training for staff and AmeriCorps volunteers; evidence-based social emotional programming and life skills training for Dreamer Scholars; as needed mental health triage and consultation for Dreamer Scholars and their families; and dance/movement and art therapy programs run by interns. Regular Dreamer Scholar meetings focus on a variety of age-appropriate life-skill issues, including nutrition, peer pressure, and the decision-making process.

MENTORS PROVIDE LONG-LASTING FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT

Five years ago, after being a long-time “I Have A Dream” supporter, Lisa McAlister decided to expand her support and further her connection by becoming a mentor. She was matched with Leslie, a member of the Iris Dreamer Scholar class, during Leslie’s freshman year of high school.

“I Have A Dream’s” mentorship program requires mentors to commit to meeting with their Dreamer Scholar twice a month for at least one year, but for pairs like Leslie and Lisa, those “required” meetings happen naturally. They connected so well, it was easy to spend time together going on hikes, training for the Bolder Boulder, cooking, going to the movies, and more.

“I’m there to be excited when things are going well. I ask about how things are going, and she knew I was going to ask,” said Lisa. “I love seeing her succeed and being there when she doesn’t.”

And that’s exactly the kind of relationship “I Have A Dream” hopes will build between mentor and Dreamer Scholar — one based on fun and new experiences.

Now that Leslie is in college, Leslie and Lisa talk a little less. But when Leslie is on break, Lisa can always expect a visit. Last time, she brought a few of her new friends from her college. “It was good to see she’s doing well and making good choices with meeting people,” Lisa said. “She’s my family now. I’m never going to stop caring for her and she’s in my life forever.”

There are many Dreamer Scholars waiting for a mentor — please join us and enrich your life!
It takes the courage and conviction of an entire community to change the trajectory of a child’s life. Team Dream is our partnership with parents, schools, and the community to make sure that our students aren’t limited by the opportunity gap that exists when you come from a low-income community. When these students are given the opportunities their higher-income peers receive, they thrive.

And when they thrive, we all benefit by the added educated and productive adults they become in our community.

You are Team Dream! Through your donations of time and resources, you show our Dreamer Scholars that they are valued and that their future is full of opportunity.

CORPORATE PARTNERS
Corporate Dream-Makers are organizations who have invested in the success of Dreamer Scholars by underwriting our annual events. Underwriting the cost of our events allows us to direct all of the money raised toward supporting our programs and adding capacity to support additional students.

We recognize our Corporate Dream-Makers by proudly displaying their banners at our events, including their logos on our website and in advertisements, and by encouraging others to support their businesses. Corporate Dream-Makers are invited to participate in volunteer opportunities with their employees and share their community commitments with their team.

Interested in learning more about Corporate Dream-Maker opportunities? Contact Storey Blackwell at 303-444-3636 x14 or storey@ihaveadreamboulder.org.

INDIVIDUAL PARTNERS
We make a commitment to every Dreamer Scholar who enters our program that we will be with them all the way through college, as well as provide a $10,000 tuition-assistance scholarship after graduating high school. This commitment is made possible by Class and Dreamer Sponsors who contribute at least $3,000 annually per Dreamer Scholar for 10 years.

Gifts of every size make an important impact on the services we can provide to students in our program. And gifts of $250 or more to eligible programs may qualify for a Childcare Contribution Credit from the State of Colorado, helping to reduce your tax liability. For Dreamer Sponsors, this Credit can help reduce the $3,000 annual donation to less than $2/day.

Give online at www.IHaveaDreamBoulder.org or contact lori.canova@ihaveadreamboulder.org or 303-444-3636 x16 to discuss sponsoring a Dreamer Scholar.
WAYS TO VOLUNTEER!

PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS AND TUTORS
Support students after school and/or in the summer, helping them with homework, study skills, and enrichment activities at least once per week for a minimum of one semester.

MENTORS
Adult volunteer mentors provide long-term, reliable relationships and serve as positive role models, meeting with a Dreamer Scholar at least twice per month for a minimum of one year.

HOSTS FOR SUMMER INTERNSHIPS AND CAREER PRESENTATIONS
Company partners offer job shadows and host summer interns. Individuals are also needed to visit the program and speak to our Dreamer Scholars about their career/industry.

TENNIS INSTRUCTORS
Volunteer tennis instructors teach Dreamer Scholars once a week during the fall, spring, and summer seasons.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Board members serve for three-year terms to provide guidance for programming, fundraising, and financial management. Committee members commit one year to support the Board of Directors by serving on one of the subcommittees.

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS
Experienced graphic designers are always needed to help design programs, newsletters, flyers, brochures, and the annual report. Photographers are needed to cover various special events and programs.

SPECIAL EVENT VOLUNTEERS
Special Event Volunteers help out with day-of logistics at various events throughout the year, including Dream Kitchens Tour, Golf Tournament, Adopt-a-Family holiday gift drop-off, Santa’s House at Village at the Peaks, All-Dreamer Sports Day, and more! Time commitment and involvement varies by project and volunteer interest.

Interested in volunteering? Apply online at www.IHaveADreamBoulder.org or contact Ashley Keltner at 303-444-3636 x19 or ashley@ihaveadreamboulder.org.

JOIN US!
We invite you to join us at any of our upcoming events to support our programs, meet Dreamer Scholars, learn about our latest successes, and have fun!

15TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT
July 24th, 2017
Each year, supporters of “I Have A Dream” come together to raise money while spending a great day on the golf course. Both a co-ed 18-hole tournament and ladies-only 9-hole tournament are part of the fun!

20TH ANNUAL DREAM-MAKER LUNCHEON
October 5th, 2017
Our signature event of the year where 1,000 community members come together to support “I Have A Dream.”

ADOPT-A-FAMILY
Fall 2017
Community members “adopt” families in our program to provide gifts and brighten their holiday celebrations. The families range in size from two to 10 members. This is a great way to give for individuals, families, businesses, and community groups!

10TH ANNUAL DREAM-MAKER BREAKFAST IN LONGMONT
March 2018
This annual event brings together over 300 community members, elected officials, and business leaders who gather to help youth in our community succeed.

DREAM KITCHENS TOUR
April 28-29th, 2018
This exciting community fundraiser provides an excellent opportunity for homeowners to showcase their unique kitchen spaces and for builders, suppliers, and businesses to exhibit their products and services all while raising money for a worthy cause.

Visit our website www.IHaveADreamBoulder.org for more details and scheduled dates.