Changing lives to and through college and beyond

Welcoming the new Aspen Dreamers and celebrating our 2013 Dreamer Graduates!
We’re on our way

Aspen Dreamers dedicated in Longmont

The “I Have a Dream” Foundation of Boulder County added its 13th Dreamer Class, sponsoring 50 students ranging from second through fourth grade who either live in the Aspen Meadows Housing neighborhood or attend Spangler Elementary. Next year, the students will attend the new Timberline K-8 School in Longmont. The Dreamers were inducted into the new “Aspen Class” during a ceremony on May 8 at Skyline High School where many of these young Dreamers will graduate, helping reinforce the event’s theme, “The Places You’ll Go.”

Don Haddad, superintendent of the St. Vrain Valley School District, Debby Paris, president of the Longmont Housing Development Corporation, Lori Canova, president and CEO of “I Have a Dream,” and Ruben Garcia a Phoenix Class parent provided words of advice, encouragement, reflection, and hope for the newly dedicated Dreamers.

City of Longmont Mayor Dennis Coombs read the Dr. Seuss classic, Oh, The Places You’ll Go!, and encouraged the Dreamers to never, never give up on achieving their goals and dreams. Yenifer Garfio, a 2012 Columbine Dreamer graduate and CU freshman, shared words of inspiration about her own experiences as a Dreamer and proudly led the new Aspen Dreamers in saying the Dreamer pledge. Kathi Jo Walder, principal of Spangler Elementary and Karolyn Borski, principal of Timberline K-8 provided emotional testimonies to the power of education and words of encouragement for the future success of their young students who joined the Aspen Class.

Seth Hays is the class’s new Program Director and will conduct the year-round, after-school and summer programming at the new Timberline K-8 school in Longmont. Seth is fluent in Spanish and holds degrees in Biology and Earth Sciences, having worked with kids in numerous capacities.

Each Dreamer will be provided with over 10 years of educational, social, and emotional support through a variety of comprehensive programs that include tutoring, mentoring, STEM and literacy skills support, public achievement opportunities, health and wellness workshops, and college and career preparation through high school graduation. Upon high school graduation, Dreamers will be eligible to receive a $10,000 tuition-assistance scholarship to use toward college or vocational school.

Aspen Meadows resident and Dreamer Parent Tisha Barajas said she is hoping the program will improve her 9-year-old daughter’s reading and provide support as the family prepares for college.

“I am hoping [“I Have a Dream”] can make reading fun along with the educational help so it will encourage her to keep working,” Barajas said.

More than 650 low-income youth have benefited from the organization’s services over the past 23 years, with over 90 percent of Dreamers graduating high school and at least 85 percent of those graduates continuing on to post-secondary education. The Aspen Class is just one example of the commitment “I Have a Dream” has made to Boulder County and the low-income community to help Dreamers become achievers, empowering them to continue “to and through” college and beyond.
With support from tutors, mentors, class sponsors, and staff, this year 18 Dreamers from four “I Have a Dream” classes graduated high school and were recognized during a graduation celebration at the Xilinx Retreat Center on May 22. These youth persevered to complete high school prepared to continue their education in college or vocational school. Each graduate is now eligible to use his or her tuition-assistance scholarship, which is the hallmark of the “I Have a Dream” model. The scholarship provides added encouragement for Dreamers to not give up on their education and to continue to and through post-secondary education.

Typically, graduation consists of 40 to 50 Dreamer graduates, however, in 2013 an entire Dreamer Class was not slated for graduation. The Casa Class Dreamers were in kindergarten through eighth grade when they were sponsored from the Casa de la Esperanza housing community, resulting in staggered graduation dates, and others from the Pioneer, Sanchez, and Columbine classes were a year behind their peers due to individual circumstances.

At the graduation celebration after each Dreamer was introduced to the friends, family, sponsors, teachers, and staff in attendance, they said a few words at the podium, highlighting which school they were graduating from and what their future plans included. Some of them discussed how they felt disconnected from school at times. Others talked about how they had to overcome familial discord and transfers from one school to another. Whether through phone calls or emails or home visits, the graduates referenced their deep appreciation for their program directors, Elyana Funk and Rigo Tostado, who worked tirelessly motivating them to succeed and assisting them with the college enrollment process.

Where other programs and people might simply give up on these youth, “I Have a Dream” stays dedicated to supporting them through high school graduation even if that means pursuing a non-traditional path. The testimonials provided by Dreamers and supporters alike echoed this aspect of the program. Dennis Coombs, Longmont Mayor, discussed how he overcame odds himself to find success in various careers and to reach personal goals, including as an engineer, restaurateur and Iron Man competitor. Connecting with Dreamers personally and letting them know that they are not alone in their struggles was a theme for the event and continues to be a successful program attribute.

In addition to their program directors, the organization's mentors, tutors, and class sponsors played key roles in the Dreamers’ successes over the past 11 to 12 years. As class sponsors, Wilma and Mike Ormsbee and Dee Perry have been closely involved in the Sanchez Class Dreamers’ lives, offering up their houses for class gatherings and celebrations as well as working as tutors for a period of time.

“One of the most important things I think this program does is to change the Dreamers’ attitudes about the importance of education,” Mike said. “Being a ‘good worker’ just isn’t enough to make it anymore. You have to be able to use your head as well as your hands.”

One hundred percent of this year’s graduates have plans to attend post-secondary education, heading to universities and colleges such as California Polytechnic University in Poma, Beloit College in Wisconsin, Front Range Community College, and the University of Colorado in Denver. These Dreamers will join 92 other Dreamers who are currently enrolled in post-secondary education.

Having completed one-leg of their educational journey, these Dreamers will now be part of a growing network of their peers overcoming the odds to achieve their dreams. As Jordan Lujan, Dreamer Alumni and University of Colorado at Boulder sophomore, said during the graduation celebration: “Trust me, there will be headaches, there will be tears, there will be doubt, and there will be moments when you want to quit, but it’s not these moments that define you—what defines you is whether you stand back up and continue, against all odds.”

Among the seven graduated Dreamer classes since 1990, 90% of Dreamers have graduated from high school, and 85% have gone on to college or vocational school.

Image courtesy of Steve Hoffer Photography
To and through

Dreamer admitted to elite university to pursue Ph.D. in Bioscience

Maria Moya, a Broadway Dreamer, graduated from high school in 2007 and continued her education at the University of Texas at Austin, pursuing her academic goals with support from the “I Have a Dream” Foundation and it’s tuition-assistance scholarship. Upon her graduation from UT-Austin, she was successfully admitted on a full-ride scholarship to The Rockefeller University in New York as one of 30 candidates accepted annually out of over 300 applicants.

Founded in 1901 by John D. Rockefeller as the Rockefeller Institute for Medical research – the country’s first institution devoted exclusively to biomedical research – The Rockefeller University has since expanded to include clinical research and graduate education. The university is world-renowned for its programs in biomedical sciences, chemistry, and physics.

The university embraces an open structure without traditional departments in order to facilitate collaboration and keep bureaucracy to a minimum. This freedom to embrace science has led to a host of biological and medical breakthroughs and numerous awards, including 24 Nobel Prizes, 21 Lasker Awards, and 20 National Medal of Science.

Moya’s mother was so thankful for the support her daughter received as a Broadway Dreamer that she wrote the following letter in appreciation, testifying to the lasting impact the organization’s programs have upon the Dreamers.

Good Afternoon Ms. Canova,

I’m forwarding a copy of the admission letter my daughter Maria V. Moya received a few months ago to start her graduate studies at the Natural Science Department at Rockefeller University in New York City. It was with great joy that we received and celebrated the fantastic news!!!

The “I Have a Dream” Foundation has been the first and fortunate opportunity through which my daughter has reached all her academic successes. I can testify that without your presence, encouragement and support she would have faced the roads to her goals without the full confidence that has been at her side ever since you came into our lives.

Please share with the Dreamers that once a little girl dreamed big, and today, thanks to your wonderful support, she is a young woman not only happily fulfilling her dream, but also a living testimonial of how far discipline and dedication can take a Dreamer.

And please, please forward our infinite thanks to those anonymous people that generously provide our children with the tools they need to become the great and successful citizens that will form the future of this country.

Eternally grateful,

María M. Martínez Rivera

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Putting together the necessary funding to sponsor a class of Dreamers for the “I Have a Dream” Foundation of Boulder County ("I Have a Dream") takes a lot of enthusiasm, hard work, dedication and persistence. “I Have a Dream” needs to raise about $1.25 million to sponsor a class to cover the scholarship fund and 10 years of programming for 50 Dreamers. While funding comes from a variety of sources – family foundations, grants, corporate donors, and fundraising events – individual donors most often step up, sometimes pledging lump sums and other times a monthly donation. For many individual donors, a story from a Dreamer or a memory of those who supported them during their youth motivated them to get involved.

Aspen Class sponsor Judi Cogen was drawn to the “I Have a Dream” program through her volunteer work with Columbine Elementary School in Boulder. She volunteers in the school's literacy program “Paws to Listen.”

“It’s chaotic and great fun,” Cogen said. Her interaction with students in the school’s Phoenix Dreamer Class inspired her to add her sponsorship to a second class in Longmont. “I want our kids to graduate,” Cogen said.

Connie and Bill Barclay are second-time sponsors. They decided to help sponsor the Aspen Class because they saw an immediate need for funds. “Although we had sponsored kids in the Phoenix Class, we felt it was also important to support the Aspen Class to get it going as soon as possible,” Connie said. “I Have a Dream” provides so much to these students. It not only accomplishes a high graduation rate but also instills in the kids that their potential is unlimited.”

New sponsor Dayna Roane is excited about her and her husband’s involvement with the Aspen Dreamers. “This program gives these kids the chance to have enriching experiences, work with involved adults, get help with their homework and interact with caring mentors and volunteers,” she said. “It gives them access to opportunities they wouldn’t normally have, and I am pretty excited about being involved with this.”

Eva Gaudio serves on the “I Have a Dream” Board of Directors and is a Dreamer sponsor for the Aspen Class. She was drawn to “I Have a Dream” by its mission to motivate and empower children from low-income communities to reach their education and career goals.

“A year ago, at the Dream-Maker Breakfast, a graduating Dreamer shared her heartfelt story of how she went from cleaning bathrooms with her mother and sisters in order to earn a living (the father was absent), to being the first in her family to graduate from high school,” Gaudio said. “In fact, “I Have a Dream” helped not only the student, but also the mother by helping the mom obtain a better paying job. They involve the entire family in the student’s success.” Gaudio went home and shared that story with her husband Jim that night, and they made the choice to sponsor a student in the Aspen Class.

Regardless of their motivation, sponsors are essential in helping Dreamers achieve their goals and break the cycle of poverty. Who was it that made a significant impact in your life? Can you be that person today for someone else?
Upcoming events

July/August
Crayons 2 Calculators Back Pack School Supply Drive

October 3
16th Annual Dream-Maker Luncheon, Omni Interlocken Resort in Broomfield — Attend our largest event of the year and hear moving testimonials from Dreamers and parents.

November/December
Adopt-a-Family Program — Provide gifts to our Dreamer families who are in need of assistance during the holiday season.

If you would like more information on these “I Have a Dream” events, please visit our website at www.IHaveADreamBoulder.org. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

**“I Have a Dream” Foundation of Boulder County**

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