

# EAGLE EYES

Volume 7, Number 3

Fall 1999

## FIVE MORE GRADUATES BRING TOTAL TO 51

On December 17, five Eagle Rock students participated in the ceremony that acknowledged them as Eagle Rock graduates. These students were Alejandro (Alex) Ortiz from Houston, TX; Elizabeth Hennigan from Fort Collins, CO; Emily Peterson from Englewood, CO; Samantha Barnes from Boulder, CO; and Talia Alarcon from San Francisco, CA.

## EAGLE ROCK ACCREDITED BY ACIS AND NCA

by Lois Easton

The words were very welcome: "On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS), I am pleased to inform you that the Eagle Rock School has been accepted for full membership status in ACIS." These words, written by John E. Creeden, Chair of the Standards for Membership Committee on October 19, 1999, culminated a four-year process of accreditation that began when the North Central Accrediting agency (that accredits public schools, universities, and colleges) accredited Eagle Rock, pending the process outlined by the ACIS.

The ACIS process began with a self-study that was completed in December 1998. In March 1999, a team of educators representing both ACIS and NCA spent three days at Eagle Rock. Their report was reviewed by the ACIS Standards for Membership Committee which decided to grant full accreditation.

Eagle Rock is, therefore, also fully accredited by the NCA as an Optional and Special Function School. The accrediting process with NCA is a continuous school improvement model, so each year Eagle Rock assesses progress and works strategically towards school improvement. The ACIS evaluation process is a seven year cycle which began in 1996 and will begin again in 2003.

In his letter announcing that accreditation had been approved, Creeden commented, "In its review of the Eagle Rock Self-Study, the Standards Committee was highly impressed with the high correlation between what the school promises to offer and what one actually finds in the academic and extracurricular programs. It was clear that the faculty and staff at Eagle Rock embrace the school's mission statement and work to implement it on a daily basis."

Creeden continued, "All members of the Standards Committee and the Visiting Team commented on the remarkable progress you and your colleagues have made in the school's very brief history. You and the faculty are to be commended for such diligent work on behalf of students."

## ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE AND THE GILBERT CONCERT HALL DEDICATED

by Karolee McLaughlin, Music Instructional Specialist

Ringling the old schoolhouse bell 57 times in commemoration of Judith Gilbert's 57 years of life was one of the highlights of the dedication of the Gilbert Concert Hall, part of the One-Room Schoolhouse. Gilbert was Eagle Rock's first Director of Curriculum; she passed away in June 1997.

The ceremony started at 2:00 on November 6 with Copeland's "Fanfare for a Common Man," performed from the balcony of the Concert Hall by two trumpeters, Robert Burkhardt and Richard Guest; a tenor horn player, Karolee McLaughlin; and a bass drummer, Abe Neas. This piece set the mood for the day.

The Eagle Rock Choir then performed "She Shall Have Music," a composition by Nick Page which brilliantly wove the tune known as "London Bridge" into the simple, haunting main melody. Next the choir sang "Rhythm of Life" by Cy Coleman,

a fast tongue-twisting piece containing a message about spreading life to all corners of the nation. "Be Still Jordan," a spiritual written by Althouse and conducted by Tony Busnardo, a student teacher from Hastings College, Nebraska, featured a solo by student Kaila Joiner.

"Cross the Wide Missouri" by Besig, also conducted by Tony, featured a flute solo by Lan To, the Life After Eagle Rock staff member.

During an interlude in the music, Lois Easton played a videotape made by Cindy Olson, Judy's oldest daughter who was unable to attend the dedication, and her family. The videotape portrayed Judy as a wonderfully devoted mother who supported music and love of life. Lois also shared a weaving that was created by twelve of Judy's professional and personal friends. Christine Gilbert Cox and Michael Gilbert, Judy's daughter and son, hung the tapestry on the wall near several portraits of Judy. The weaving in the pattern, One Thousand Flowers, was made with yarn in Judy's favorite colors of blue, rose, and purple.

See "Gilbert" - Page 2

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## TEACHING AS THE TASK OF TELEMACHUS

by Robert Burkhardt, Head of School

Like many others, I turn to poetry for inspiration, solace and perspective. In particular, Tennyson's "Ulysses" has been a personal touchstone for decades. The range and scope of "Ulysses" never ceases to fire my imagination. Serendipitously, the poem offers remarkable advice to teachers.

Late in the poem, Ulysses is about to strike off ". . .to follow knowledge like a sinking star,/Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought." He muses for a moment on his son, Telemachus, who is:

"Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good."

In four short lines of iambic pentameter Tennyson captures almost the full range of the teacher's tasks and goals. Here's how it works for me.

**Well loved of me:** Teaching is at its heart an act of love. One of my early mentors, Robert Greenway, used to ask this question: "How long has it been since you taught a culture you believed . . .since you felt education simply to be sharing what you most deeply enjoy with those you love?" Passion for the job at hand is a *sine qua non*.

**Discerning to fulfil this labor:** The good teacher is restless, like Ulysses, in a constant effort to find new ways to help students open doors of understanding and discernment. It is labor in the fullest sense: hard work, lots of pushing, tears of frustration, all directed towards the joyous birth of original ideas.

**By slow prudence:** The learning will not necessarily happen quickly or evenly. It will occur in fits and starts, and will obligate the teacher to make continuing subtle (and hopefully wise) judgments about text and context.

**To make mild a rugged people:** Not all students leap delightedly into learning. Some are prisoners of past unhappy experiences; many have rough and sensitive edges. The teacher needs to choreograph a curriculum and an environment in which the "rugged" students can hone their life and learning skills.

**And thro' soft degrees:** This echoes and reinforces the need for "slow prudence." The teacher must make haste deliberately, "discerning" when and how to challenge the student with the next level of learning. It is a slow, frequently painstaking process; harsh measures rarely deliver efficacy.

**Subdue them:** Here is my disagreement with Tennyson. While a forceful teacher can temporarily control, it is ultimately up to students to voluntarily adopt the disciplines of learning. In Kurt Hahn's words, "Students must conquer their own self-deception by subduing themselves. The teacher ultimately (and simply) impels them towards learning."

**To the useful and the good:** Here are the aims of education. What is useful? What is good? What is my role in advancing both? In my fourth decade of teaching I continue to ask these questions, and I hope to provoke students to habituate themselves to similarly inquire into their own lives. One "useful" part of education is the culture of a school. I agree with Ted and Nancy Sizer that "serious secondary education is about culture." We have made that a focus at Eagle Rock. One "good" part of education is the English language: Master its nuances and Shakespeare's world opens wide. As a teacher, my job is to cheerfully and relentlessly champion the useful and the good.

Tennyson also offers guidance for teachers and students in the poem's closing. We may be, he says, "Made weak by time and fate," but our task as learners, now and forever, is "to strive, to see, to find, and not to yield."

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"Gilbert" - Continued

Robert Burkhardt, Master of Ceremonies, invited members of the audience to share memories and stories about Judy Gilbert. Several humorous and endearing stories were shared and then Robert read the biography Judy's daughters wrote for her memorial service. The reading was underscored by Karolee McLaughlin on the flute and Tony Busnardo on guitar playing "Ashokan Farewell" by Jay Unger.

The Choir's last song was "On Eagle's Wings," a Michael Jonacua arrangement which featured two flutes played by Karolee McLaughlin and Lan To, two pianos played by Elizabeth Halas and Tony Busnardo, electric bass played by Dave Noble, and two percussionists Abe Neas and Matt Mulloy. The lyrics provided assurance that no matter what happens you are not alone.

After Judy's family and guests rang the old school bell 57 times, they joined in singing "Seventy Six Trombones," a favorite of Judy's from the musical *Music Man*.

Karolee McLaughlin conducted some of the musical pieces with Rick Roberts from San Francisco State University conducting others.

## GRADUATE HIGHER EDUCATION FUND INCREASES

by Dick Herb, Director of Operations

The purpose of the Graduate Higher Education Fund has been to support graduates of Eagle Rock School as they pursue higher education. The Fund was established by the American Honda Education Corporation (AHED) Board by resolution in October 1997. The resolution outlined investment management policies and policies outlining the selection of awardees.

Many Eagle Rock graduates receive generous financial aid awards from the colleges they attend. Yet, there are always a few thousand dollars in incidentals per year that are not covered by financial aid. It is our hope to cover a significant portion of these so that graduates are not burdened financially but freed to experience their higher education to the fullest.

Since the inception of the fund in October 1997, sixteen awards of \$1,000 have been made. Five of these have been mailed at the request of awardees to colleges of their choice. The rest are on hold until graduates need and request them. Graduates have three years from the date of their graduation to request their checks.

Beginning in December 1999, awards will be increased to \$1,500. Two years from now, our goal is to build the fund to \$250,000. Our ultimate goal is to be able to provide graduate awardees \$2,500 each year they are in college, a total award of \$10,000. With an anticipated 35 to 40 graduates in college at a time, the annual outlay will be in the range of \$100,000. Our ultimate long-term goal is to build the fund to \$3,000,000.

The current status of our fund follows:

	<u>July Position</u>	<u>November Position</u>
Gifts	\$129,511	\$138,175
Investment Gain	23,039	27,080
Awards & Expenses	<u>4,259</u>	<u>7,670</u>
	\$156,809	\$172,925

### Fund Raising Events

Graduate Work Day, which sees parents, alums, tutors and friends all teaming up with staff and students to work around Estes Park earned \$4,200. In between our fall and spring graduate work days, we sell firewood from the ERS campus and deliver it all around town. Overall, these efforts earn \$11,000 per year.

Thanks to Stan and Gail Pennington (parents of Brian who graduated April 1998); Ron Argenta (father of Jena, ER 15); Rick Penner (former ERS staff member) and friend Mark; Steve and Amy Lane (who already volunteer as tutors at ERS); Ruth Whirl (mother of Casey, ER 15); Cindy Stuart (daughter Emily will graduate this December); and the Hill family (Lillian, Beverly, Chantall, etc.) all supporting Leia (ER 19 in her first trimester at ERS).

Thanks to those who have so generously hired us. The next Graduate Work Day is scheduled for Saturday, May 20, 2000. If you are interested in helping or hiring, contact me at 970-586-7120 or email me at richardherb@aol.com.

A silent auction held December 11 is the newest addition

to the annual fund raising events. The auction was of art produced by professional artists, students and staff plus professional services (fix my computer, mow my lawn each week). It was held in the new One-Room Schoolhouse and the reception area of the Professional Development Center (PDC). Food and music enhanced the displays and turned it into a festive occasion. This is an event to be sure to add to your calendar for next year.

A special request to all friends of Eagle Rock: Would you consider a gift during this Holiday Season to the Graduate Higher Education Fund? All gifts are tax deductible, and you will receive a letter of thanks and a gift receipt. If you plan to make a gift, make your check out to:

Eagle Rock School Graduate Fund

P. O. Box 1770

Estes Park, CO 80517

Many thanks!

## IT WAS A ROCKIN' ROAD TRIP

by Jason Cushner, Mathematics Instructional Specialist

(Editor's Note: This is from the introduction to the Rockin' Road Trip Curriculum Book that can be obtained from Jason Cushner by writing to him at Eagle Rock or sending him an email at jcushner@psd.k12.co.us. Other instructors on the trip were John Breyer and Sibyl Diver. Students were Jena Argenta, Jaylene Canchola, Elizabeth Hennigan, Ruffy Dolan, Abe Neas, Courtney Osterfelt, and Josh Weiser.)

"This class was the most fun I ever had in school!" Ruffy Dolan, student.

Vedawoo is like an alien planet, with massive multicolored blocks in all sorts of strange shapes. Walking to the climb, we passed a 12 foot high rock mushroom. As we climbed up the wide cracks, large crystals pushed into our skin. Whether in the name of learning, or fun, every step we took was worth it.

Climbing was the theme of this class which led naturally to the other subject areas and questions from the students, "Why is the rock like that? What happens if you fall?" This class studied geology, math, physics, environmental science, physical education, and service, all based around rock climbing. A key reason why this class was successful was because it was fun. Students are playful. When put in an environment where they can be physically active and learn in a setting that is real instead of theoretical, they have fun and the teaching is easy.

We toured Wyoming, Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, and the Black Hills of South Dakota. We stopped at different locations to hike, climb and admire. Then we would do a lesson to better understand the world that surrounded us. Our homework was done in meadows and mountain ranges. The students created portfolios which defended their learning in the different subject areas.

## SCIENCE CURRICULUM

by David Hoskins, Science and Environmental Science Instructional Specialist

I was recently asked to answer the following question in the form of a short presentation to the Eagle Rock staff: "Dave, what is it that you do around here, anyway?" Well, every ERS staff person does a whole lot of different things, but we're all given a primary area of responsibility when we come aboard, and mine happens to be science and environmental science.

So let me begin to answer the above question by explaining what it is that I do not do. I don't do Mr. Wizard or Dr. Science flashy experiments and wacky demonstrations. I do not get students' attention with classroom-shattering explosions or disappearing cats (though I've been tempted). I also don't do tree-hugging, extremist environmental activism nor do I whip students (often) into an anti-industry/government frenzy and then turn them loose on the public. It's not that these aren't valuable approaches; it's just not what I do.

What I choose to do is expose students to environmental issues and scientific concepts and thinking skills by using, if possible, service to create meaning, and interactions with people (of all ages) outside of the ERS community to create interest and an awareness of the "Big Picture." As a result, I have created and nurtured a tapestry of partnerships with schools, non-profit organizations and government agencies (see map) that helps me to provide meaningful learning opportunities for our students. The following is a brief description of just a few of these partnerships.

Eagle Rock has a long history of working with elementary schools in the Denver Public Schools (DPS) and the Boulder Valley School District. Our students are trained to work with children in a variety of ways including teaching environmental concepts, acting as science fair judges and assisting with literacy and athletic events. We also have joined with several Front Range schools under the guidance and support of the University of Colorado at Denver (UCD) to study the behavior of an endangered species of fish from Lake Victoria in Africa. The goal is to gain a sufficient understanding of the fish in our classroom aquarium through direct scientific inquiry to get them to breed. We've discovered that this is no easy task. Luckily, we are able to consult, via the internet, with a group of Spanish speaking 3rd graders in Denver who are experts in this area when we need help. This allows students to practice their Spanish while doing science.

In addition to working with schools, we also have several partnerships with govern-

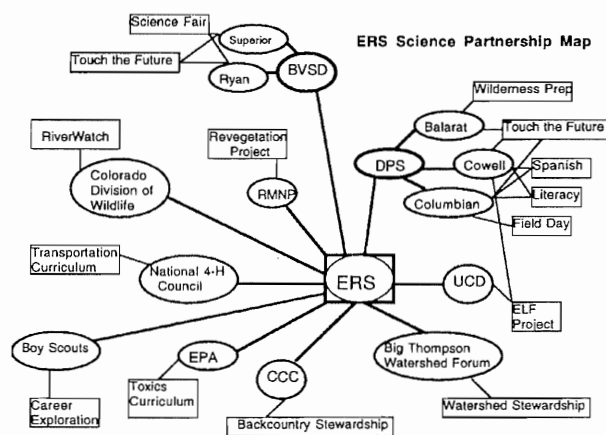
ment agencies. Eagle Rock has been a member of the Rivers of Colorado Water Watch Network (River Watch) for about three years. We monitor the health of our local watershed by regularly collecting and analyzing river samples. We then send the data to the Colorado Division of Wildlife who use the information to make policy decisions statewide.

We have also worked outside of the state for the past couple of summers with the California Conservation Corps (CCC). Our students have learned about wilderness stewardship through trail building and maintenance activities and have pushed the limits of their physical abilities by working alongside back country trail crews. We then return home with these newly acquired skills and apply them on our own property.

The latest ERS partnership is with the National Park Service. We were asked to assist them with a project in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) to revegetate several disturbed areas by collecting native plant seeds, germinating them in our greenhouse and then transporting and planting the seedlings in the back country. Not only will we work directly with natural resource management professionals, but we'll collaborate with a local group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders on this project as well.

Eagle Rock School is fairly isolated from the outside world in many ways and it is easy for us to go about our daily routines without much thought about what's happening outside of our campus. Therefore, I feel that it is not only very valuable but also extremely important that our students be given opportunities to practice the social and academic skills that every Eagle Rock staff member works so hard to engender.

I've seen Eagle Rock ERS students rise to the occasion over and over again when given the chance to serve others outside of our immediate community within an academic context. Besides, I can't think of a better way to flaunt the wonderful talents of our Eagle Rock students.



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Human Performance

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## ORCHIDS AND OBDURACY: COMMUNITY BUILDING AT EAGLE ROCK

by Jena Argenta, ERS Student

*Around sweet tables, as delicate as the orchids in the middle or the new aspen outside, with tied tongues and preconceived notions, with histories and vacuums, pretension and apprehension, we began. Halfway from Scott Peck's pseudo-community on our way to community. We are still beginning; reveling in the beauty of old men and little girls who strike up conversation out of cornered eyed glances and nervous expectations ...with the goal of seeing eye to eye.*

In previous trimesters, Eagle Rock staff and students have met as a community to discuss pressing or pertinent issues such as personal safety, lightning, or the latest "non-negotiable" violation. This trimester, three community meetings have focused on the task of building community. Everything from covenants to militants. The most recent meeting was led by students as a first step in creating a safe space for giving and receiving feedback. This came from a multitude of conversations, Notch Top outings, and presentations about feedback from which it became clear that more productive feedback was necessary.

**Community building is an adventure, a going into the unknown. People are routinely terrified of the emptiness of the unknown. Consequently they fill their minds with generally false expectations of what the experience will be like. In fact we humans seldom go into any experience without preconceptions. We then try to make the experience conform to our expectations.**

**Scott Peck**

Feedback is a natural and essential step in the process of building community. Moving community forward can be as slow as snails and require the delicate touch of surgeons or metalsmiths. If people are not challenged, they don't al-

ways move forward. Feedback challenges our present set of views and behaviors by presenting new information, experiences, and ways of being, or a heightened self-awareness.

**. . . A collection of individuals cannot become a community unless, as individuals, they are willing to become, at least to some degree, empty and contemplative. And they cannot maintain themselves as a community unless they continually contemplate themselves as an organism.**

**Scott Peck**

The meeting began after lunch and lasted into the evening with an intermission for Ultimate Frisbee. It was slow at first, like babes easing their way into the tube for the first time. Because feedback is often an amorphous term with negative connotations, our first objective was to define what productive feedback is, its purpose, its delivery and its lasting effects. This segment had two purposes. The first was to make sure everyone had the same understanding. The second was to redefine feedback and begin the process of giving and receiving it.

Next, we broke into smaller groups of five to eight people in the Lodge. Each individual gave a three-minute life story centered around their reactions to feedback and their associations with it. The usual roar of meal-time casualties and touch-and-go conversation was replaced by a more subdued, almost muffled, interaction.

That evening, we reconvened in the hearth area to recap the morning. This was followed by a discussion of how people like to be approached, and several readings on risk and fear. Once again, we met in our small groups to exchange feedback. The content of each group's discussion was as varied as the individuals. One group of mostly new students became more familiar with each other; another acknowledged each other's hard work in tears and smiles. Others hashed out their issues or presented their observations, saying, "This is how you occur to me . . ."

In the final conversation that followed the feedback, many felt that another fo-

rum was needed because people "treated each other like people" in the groups. Institutional issues and community issues are very often the result of personal issues. To address the institutional or community issues, you have to address the individuals first. Creating bonds of humanness, instead of hierarchy, is an excellent place to start. In a culture prone to polite hand-me-downs, professionalism, and averted eyes, this can be very confronting at first. And very liberating in the long run.

Since one meeting is not nearly enough to create a lasting effect, a staff and student community building has been proposed as a way to open doors for more feedback between staff, between students and within the larger community. Ideally, feedback will be part of our culture instead of just a day's event. This meeting brought feedback to the table of conversation. The question that remains is whether we will remain open to the dialogue after the romance fades or let it slip to the wayside like half-sewn sweaters and plants in the basement. Building community, like building culture, is sleepless. It is true that we are only as strong as our weakest link. Each individual will at some time be the strongest, sometimes the weakest. It would be incredible if we started to share our inadequacies and observations as readily as our triumphs and platitudes.

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### "Road Trip" - Continued

Wyoming was a great place to teach this class because in a relatively small area there is a large diversity of geologic features and different types of climbing. The way this book is set up though, the lessons can be applied almost anywhere, including in the classroom. So use whatever material from this book that you want in whatever way you want because we all have different teaching environments. We didn't have time but it would have been ideal for the students to plan the logistics or some of the geology lessons.

We had many successes and made many mistakes during this course. We are writing this book to hopefully help others learn from what we did. We want to learn from you, too, so feel free to contact us with questions, comments, concerns or suggestions. Have fun!

## A LETTER FROM A GRADUATE \_\_\_\_\_

*The following letter was received from Sandra Ramirez who graduated in August 1998.*

Hello, Eagle Rock,

I was thinking about your birthday and how glad I am you were born. I think it's funny how the further I get from the time I graduated, the smaller the number of people I know reside in your womb. My letters become more like news from a foreign newspaper than I would want them to be. But I keep on writing, so my thoughts and dreams can continue to live in the minds of those who work to maintain you, the Rock.

A lot has happened in the last couple of months. I finished Public Allies; attended a Youth Leadership Summit in Austin, TX; joined the National Network for Youths' National Council on Youth Policy; moved back to Boston; took a job with the Governor's Task Force on Hate Crimes. And, I may start another job with the National Conference for Community and Justice. So, as you can see, I have been busy.

My Public Ally (PA) experience was an eye opener for what some of the working world is like. Community politics, office politics, networking, personal boundaries, professionalism, non-profit funding, public relations, supervision, grant writing, and reporting were some of the things I learned while working for PA. Networking was definitely my favorite. Through this, I learned to understand what Robert always says, "50% is what you know and 50% is whom you know." It's amazing what and where you can get when you know folks in all different areas.

Once while attending a meeting, I thought about your staff. I was very proud of them because, even though they may not always agree with the process, they share the same commitment to education. They are supportive of each other, believe in the students and in themselves. I realized how important  $8 + 5 = 10$  is to them as a team. I am grateful such a great value system was created. Although I was never in a staff meeting (lucky them), I hope they all challenge each other (like they challenged me) to be open and honest about their ideas, dreams, and opinions. I also wish that they continue this tradition of excellence always.

My voice has also gotten stronger and clearer. My ego has learned that there is no stupid question. And, I have learned

that when you know what you want and where you are going, the crowd breaks and the people let you go by. The world suddenly becomes your canvas and you're an artist. I can do anything I want; I just have to make that choice. The best part is, if I don't like what I am doing, I am free to change my mind (thank you, Michael S.). I continue to meet and learn from amazing people. I am happy PA is over and I am anxious about all I will learn in the next couple of months. The world is my classroom, and I am a happy student.

I am also in the process of applying to school. I am going to Brown University in Rhode Island. Brown does not know this yet, but I will be a student there in the fall of 00. I am going to be in need of committed recommendation letter writers, and I hope I have some volunteers among your staff.

Now at the Task Force, I am working with a new set of folks. I am excited about this new adventure I've embarked upon. I am also thrilled about all I am going to learn from the people I'll encounter through this experience. When I think a little further about where I am today, I am very thankful I got the opportunity to be in such a safe place. In your womb, I was encouraged to explore who I was and who I wanted to be, even if it meant starting again day after day. I had an incredible team of peers and staff who taught me the meaning of community, service, learning and personal growth. I cannot believe how far I have come in the last four years. I realize I am only a rookie in the game of life. My journey has just begun and I am looking forward to being a lifetime learner and server.

It has been only a year since I walked across your stage with my cap and gown to receive my well-earned Eagle Rock High School diploma. Although I knew then and now that it was time for me to go, I miss you terribly still. I love you and all those who make up who you are (past, present, future staff, students, instructors, houseparents or not) more than my vocabulary can ever express. I am thrilled about how much more family I have because of you. No matter where I go, you are always on my mind and in my corazon. You still make me laugh, cry, frown, and sing. Thank you for all you have done for me.

You are a part of me and I am a part of you. . . .  
Happy Birthday, Eagle Rock  
I hope you live forever!

PEACE, LOVE and SMILES  
Sandra Milena Ramirez, ER6 through ER 15

### AMERICAN HONDA EDUCATION CORPORATION

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