



EAGLE EYES

Volume 19, Number 1

News From Winter/Spring 2011 Trimester

Dear Friend:

It's time again for the Estes Park Duck Race, and we hope you will make a choice to support the Eagle Rock Graduate Fund by purchasing one or more tickets. This annual fund-raiser generates money to assist past and future Eagle Rock graduates in their pursuit of higher education.

Every year in Estes Park the local Rotary Club sponsors the Duck Race. On Saturday, May 7, 2011, more than 5000 rubber duckies will float down the Big Thompson River from Nicky's Resort to Riverside Plaza. The first 500 ducks will win nifty prizes including a 46" Samsung LED TV, a MacBook laptop computer, Nook e-reader, Flip video camcorder, Asus Netbook, iPod 32 GB, HP OfficeJet 6300 Wireless Scanner and a TomTom XL 350M GPS. You need not be present to win. Local organizations sell Duck Race tickets for \$20 apiece; the more tickets we sell, the more money we raise for our Graduate Fund. Please help us.

We established the Eagle Rock Graduate Fund in 1997. Through the generosity of many

individuals since then we have awarded more than \$550,000 to our 152 graduates (seven students are hoping to earn diplomas in April). Every graduate is currently eligible for up to \$14,000 towards the costs of undergraduate and post-graduate education. As we grow The Fund, that amount will increase.

Here's how you can help: Please buy as many tickets as you can afford (checks made out to ESTES PARK DUCK RACE--multiples of \$20); ask your family and friends to participate as well. Our goal this year is to raise \$19,000 for the Graduate Fund. Send checks (to be received no later than May 6th) to Eagle Rock School, we'll send you your tickets, and you can start figuring out where to put that 46" TV. Two years ago the grand prize winner was Eagle Rock graduate Adrienne Bovee.

Thank you in advance for supporting Eagle Rock and our graduates.

Sincerely,

Robert Burkhardt, Head of School

BALL SHARES EXPERIENCES WITH KIWANIS CLUB

by Aziza Jackson

Lincoln High School mathematics teacher Jennifer Ball shared her experience at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center with members of the Kiwanis Club at their meeting on Tuesday at Citizen's Baptist Hospital.

Ball was among several teachers that got a chance to visit Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center in Estes Park, Colo. in September of 2010.

Talladega County Schools Superintendent Suzanne Lacey introduced Ball saying, "She is a jewel. She is one of those teachers that's something special and that something special is motivating students."

Ball shared with the audience a few of her experiences working with students at EHS, which is a "value-driven school" for children ages 15-17 who have had challenges with traditional academic programs and a low chance of graduating from high school.

The following article appeared in the February 18, 2011 edition of the Daily Home and is being reprinted with permission.



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Development Center

Editor:

Dan Condon
2750 Notaiiah Road
Estes Park, CO
80517

Phone Number:

(970) 586-0600

Email:

info@eaglerockschool.org

Website:

www.EagleRockSchool.org

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Robert Burkhardt

Head of School

Dan Condon

Associate Director of
Professional Development

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS: HELPING STRUGGLING STUDENTS SUCCEED

by Lois Brown Easton & Michael Soguero

The following article appeared in the February edition of the Phi Delta Kappan and portions are being reprinted with permission.

Educators who have worked with Eagle Rock to design or redesign schools

have had to challenge a set of assumptions that might have prevented them from making substantive change. Here are four key assumptions that educators must challenge so that schools can serve the most vulnerable students.

Assumption #1: Adults must create, maintain, and improve schools. Of course they should, but most education organizations overlook the important role that students could and should play in their own schools. A hierarchy of adults from state officials to teachers usually designs and runs schools. Adults work hard to craft schools they think will be the best possible environments for teaching and learning, but they seldom consult the consumers of their products and processes, the students themselves.

Eagle Rock example: Students and adults use both formal and informal ways to ensure that everyone has a voice at Eagle Rock. Formally, students as well as adults serve on curriculum committees, staff hiring panels, student selection committees, policies and procedures colloquia, and community forums. They take turns leading meetings related to the life of the community. If students

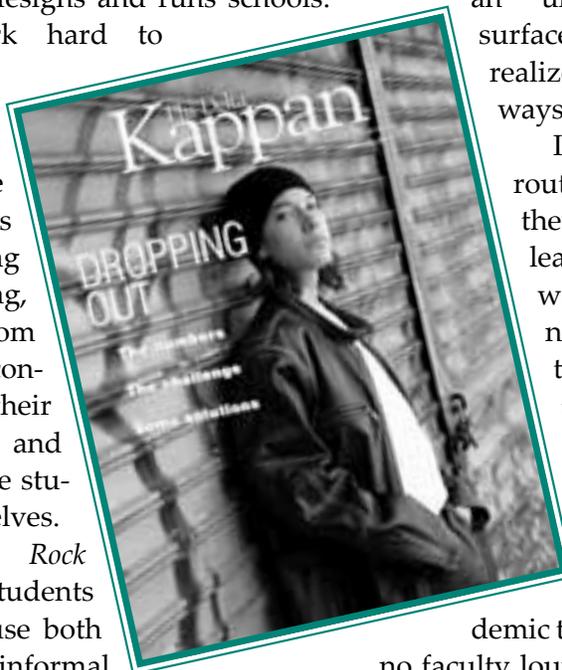
or staff members sense a need, they form task forces, which may be populated only

by students or by students and staff members interested in the issue. Task forces know that they'll need to draft, present, and revise proposals for making changes. Students are as interested as — or more than — adults in how their school is run so that it's safe and nurturing for everyone.

Sound like anarchy? Strangely enough, it isn't. Because there are mechanisms for affecting the community, there is no overt and almost no covert action among students. (Every once in a while an "underground" community surfaces... until students and staff realize that they have legitimate ways of being heard.)

Informally, staff members routinely ask students what they need to succeed. Students learn respectful ways of working toward what they need; they operate within the school community; and they engage in democratic processes that will last their lifetimes.

Informally, Eagle Rock staff members have lots of nonacademic time with students. There's no faculty lounge or staff lunchroom on campus to separate adults from students. Staff members and students participate in intramurals and clubs. Students and staff members belong to "houses" and engage in house activities together, including governance, advisories, resolution of



EAGLE ROCK'S RE-ACCREDITATION

by Amanda Christman, former Professional Development Center Associate



Seven standards were under the microscope during the first week of March as we participated in the AdvancEd re-accreditation process. The accreditation team, which consisted of seven educators from around Colorado, were looking into Eagle Rock's vision and purpose; school leadership; teaching and learning; resources and support; documentation and use results; stakeholder communication; and commitment to continuous improvement.

Before the arrival of the accreditation team, Eagle Rock spent months preparing for their visit. Our preparation aimed to involve as many staff as possible, give an accurate representation of ERS, and highlight our strengths while also acknowledging and embracing future challenges.

The preparation process included small self-study groups for each of the standards. Each of these self-study groups addressed many different topics within each standard. For example, one group explored how everyone could become involved in student leadership. After the self-study group work was completed, we composed a narrative about our strengths for each standard.

The final piece of preparation involved composing an executive institutional summary about our school. In this document we provided a general overview of the school, a description of our students performance, the schools goals, as well as the challenges and opportunities that we face. The executive institutional summary and our documentation from the self-study groups were presented to the accreditation team to review prior to their visit.

During the three-day visit, the accreditation team examined all parts of the school using the seven standards as their measurement rubrics. While on campus they observed all aspects of the Eagle Rock learning community, including attending gatherings, observing classes, eating meals with students, and talking to many different staff members on campus.

During the self-study we rated ourselves on each standard. Our self-evaluation found Eagle Rock School to be "operational" on all standards. However, by the end of the accreditation process the team felt that we were too modest in our self-assessment. At the end of the visit the accreditation team delivered a report out for all community members. The team shared with us their rating of Eagle Rock on each standard, what we need to improve on over the next two years, and also what we are doing extremely well.

Our vision and mission was rated as "highly functional." The team recognized that $8+5=10$ is imbedded in everything that we do. We were given "highly functional" rating for our school leadership, which is partially due to the fact that we allow everyone to lead on campus. For teaching and learning the team was impressed on how all students are engaged in classes, and how most of our classes revolve around real-world situations. However they encouraged us to develop roles to help maintain student retention. With this recommendation for future development we received a rating of "operational." For continuous improvement and documenting and using results we also received an "operational" rating. While we received a "highly

Susan D'Amico
Administrative Assistant

Mark Dougherty
Sous Chef

Denise Dunn
Business Administration
Specialist

Cynthia Elkins
Arts

Beth Ellis
Learning Resources
and Information

Anastacia Galloway
Registrar

Mike Glowacki
Head Cook

John Guffey
Service Learning

Berta Guillen
Society and Cultures

Karen Ikegami
Mathematics

Janet Johnson
Science

Jeff Liddle
Director of Curriculum

Denise Lord
Life After Eagle Rock

Susan Luna
Director of Operations

Dan Madsen
Technology

Dave Manzella
Literacy & Literature

Mark Palmer
Public Allies

L'Tanya Perkins
Admissions Associate

Tim Phelps
Chef Instructor

Scott Rashid
Second Chef

Kirstin Sizemore
Human Performance

Philbert Smith
Director of Students

Michael Soguero
Director of
Professional Development

Terry Tierney
Assistant Facilities

Jesse Tovar
Health and Wellness
Counselor

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issues, and — yes — parties. Staff members seem approachable in these nonacademic settings, and students enjoy “hanging out” with them. Students and staff members get to know each other beyond their “student” or “staff” roles, and talking about what would improve the setting that has brought them together — Eagle Rock — is a frequent topic in conversation, sometimes leading to more formal ways of implementing change.

Assumption #2: As it once was, so it shall forever be in terms of time, credits, and graduation. Time: 12 or 13 years to graduate. Each of these years lasts for about nine months, each month has about four weeks, each week has five days, and each day has about seven hours. All of that time is spent in a building called “school.”

Students must accrue credits toward graduation. But obtaining credits does not signify anything about what a student knows or is able to do, only that the student has sat in a class for long enough and has, perhaps, engaged in enough work to achieve a minimal grade.

Eagle Rock example: Graduation requirements at Eagle Rock have never been based on time. Students enter and graduate from Eagle Rock at a variety of ages. Because there are no grade levels, students do not move from grade to grade. There are also no grades, as in marks of quality; proficiency is expected of every student.

Students graduate when they demonstrate that they have met these five expectations: expanding their knowledge base, communicating effectively, creating and making healthy life choices, engaging as a global citizen, and practicing

leadership for justice.

These five expectations reflect holistic outcomes but have important, specific curriculum implications. The expectations give life to the curriculum; they help students understand why they need to learn certain standards. Jeff Liddle, ERS director of curriculum, put it this way: “Our curriculum originates in the five expectations and is learner-centered, experiential, strengths-based, relevant to global conditions, and achievable within a reasonable time period; its purpose is to promote teamwork and independent, imaginative thinking.”

Students enroll in classes and participate in other learning experiences in order to work on the five expectations. They might, for example, take a class called “Blood and Guts,” a biology course with a twist. They might also work in the school kitchen on KP (Kitchen Patrol) learning about sustainable agriculture. They document their learning in a variety of ways and, at the end of 10 weeks, make a Presentation of Learning (POL) to a panel of outsiders. They make a case that they’ve worked toward one or more of the expectations. Their transcript records what they have accomplished related to those expectations.

Instructional specialists at the school, working with students, consider all the different ways students can work toward deep understanding of the five expectations. These include courses, but also experiences in the life of the community. They include individual, small-, and large-group work. Instructors may take students off campus, such as in a course called “For the Birds,” during which students survey the bird population in a nearby national

park. They may require students to take on leadership roles. Learning experiences may be as short as a week or as long as interest endures, such as serving on Fairness, a committee that adjudicates student behavior.

Assumption #3: Schools need to organize learning according to content areas (often known as subjects or disciplines). This content is sacred and passed on by sanctified (certificated) adults to novitiates. Time-honored methods must be used to deliver this content. Buildings are often divided according to this content, entire hallways consecrated for science or mathematics or English.

There is a reason that schools persist in dividing learning into content areas: It is relatively easy. When learning is naturally interdisciplinary and holistic, it’s messy to identify, hard to assess, and challenging to track in order to decide on promotion from grade to grade or graduation. There is also a cultural fear that if students don’t learn the subjects of school, they won’t be able to progress in the world nor contribute to it as wage earners or citizens.

Interestingly enough, the learning that is promoted by organizations such as The Partnership for 21st-Century Skills includes core skills as part of mastery of higher literacies. Other skills are naturally beyond traditional disciplines: Learning and Innovation Skills; Information, Media, and Technology Skills; Life and Career Skills.

Eagle Rock example: There’s no doubt at Eagle Rock that students want to be learners; they are innately curious about their lives. In the

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pursuit of learning related to their own curiosity, they will part waters, move mountains, and employ electronic devices for purposes beyond gaming or texting.

Jeremy, an early Eagle Rock graduate, wondered why so little had been written about Hispanic civil rights. Suddenly, his learning had a purpose. He became a historian, writer, speaker, and interviewer. He used mathematics to understand graphs, charts, and data. He followed the scientific process to check his hypotheses about the world. Every class he took at Eagle Rock became a forum for his question: “Where were the Hispanics? What were they doing related to this idea or concept?”

There are three keys to making a system work when it’s not based on disciplines. The first key is to make the unit of students small enough to be managed by a few adults who know the students well. Eagle Rock is purposefully small; it enrolls no more than 96 students at any time. The second key is for each student to have a portfolio of work and a record of individual educational progress. Students are responsible for their own portfolios and records. Using them, they make a case for their learning at the end of each trimester in their presentations of learning (POLs). Two or three trimesters before they expect to graduate, they present their portfolios and records to staff — including their advisers — and to peers, who review progress with them and advise additional work, as needed. When ready, they apply for graduation.

The third key is choice. In as many ways as possible, Eagle Rock

staff members give students choices about their learning. Students gradually learn that they can ask to customize their learning not only in terms of what, specifically, they learn, but also in how they learn and how they present their learning. Surprisingly, though there isn’t a discipline focus, students themselves investigate the traditional subjects of school in pursuit of their own interests and the choices they’ve made about learning.

Assumption #4: School doesn’t need to change. It worked just fine for us (“Look at what we’ve been able to do!”). It’s hard to imagine that an organization focused on learning would not, itself, be a learning organization. It’s equally hard to imagine a learning organization remaining static when the national graduation rate hovers around 68% for the class of 2007, with lower rates for certain populations (Educational Projects in Education 2010: 25). James Freeman Clarke, an American preacher and author, said it well: “We are either progressing or retrograding all the while. There is no such thing as remaining stationary in this life.” Let us not regress.

Eagle Rock example: Robert Burkhardt, head of school since its inception in 1993, said, “We are young enough [completing our 17th year] to remember the issues attendant to startup, yet experienced enough to have developed a strong culture of respect and expectation.” Eagle Rock did not get it right the first trimester... nor the second... nor the 32nd. Members of the community are still learning.

Four facets of the Eagle Rock community ensure that it is a learning organization. First, students play a key role in the process of

school improvement. Their voices keep change on the horizon.

A constant stream of visitors also keeps Eagle Rock targeted on improvement. A seemingly casual question from a visitor can lead staff to rethink policies and procedures. Students and staff alike have to explain Eagle Rock to visitors and, in each version of the story, discover what might make ERS better for both students and staff.

No staff member signed up for Eagle Rock to maintain the status quo in education. Staff members may not agree on what to change, but they are always looking for ways to improve Eagle Rock for students.

Finally, a process for improvement prevails at Eagle Rock:

1. Staff and students constantly focus on why improvement is needed. Students have not succeeded in previous settings. They need to succeed in order to be contributing citizens. Today’s adults need today’s youths to succeed. Students want to succeed; they don’t set out to fail.

2. Staff and students identify *what* they want to do based on *why* they need to make changes.

3. Staff and students rigorously search for examples of this aspiration already in existence at ERS, seeking “solutions that already exist,” an example of positive deviance (Sparks 2004: 46).

4. The example leads to steps to magnify the effect. Since the change is not “out of the blue,” requiring a task force and distracting everyone in order to take on something that might or might not succeed, this approach works. Staff and students look for “spaces” that already exist in the community and curriculum in which to make improvements.

EAGLE ROCK WELCOMES NEW STAFF

by Dan Condon, Associate Director of Professional Development Center

Eagle Rock recently welcomed its two newest staff members *Anastacia Galloway*, as Registrar, and *Marya Washburn*, as adjunct Wilderness Instructor. Each will begin their first full trimester in these roles in May.

As Registrar, Anastacia will be responsible for coordinating students' transcripts, explaining these transcripts to the outside world, interacting with students regarding their educational path through ERS towards graduation, working with the Professional Development Center team on projects, and planning, coordinating, and executing the POL's as well as graduation.

Anastacia grew up in Weirton, WV which is a dying steel town located in the Northern Panhandle of WV. She has lived in Weirton, WV; Morgantown, WV; Iquique, Chile; Villahermosa, Mexico; Hermitage, TN; Nashville, TN; and State College, PA, and she currently resides in Estes Park.

Anastacia attended West Virginia University on full scholarship where she studied marketing and Spanish. In 2003, she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a BA in Foreign Language and a BS in Business Administration.

After graduating from WVU, Anastacia interned with a marketing/PR/advertising company in Villahermosa, Mexico. After returning to the United States she worked as a purchasing agent and logistics coordinator in the plumbing, heating and cooling industry.

Anastacia is most excited about becoming a part of a learning community. She explains, "I have never worked in a job where

my new colleagues and supervisors greeted me with a hug when I arrived to fill out the peremptory paperwork. I never felt so welcomed as when students with whom I had interacted with for a small amount of time remembered my name weeks later. I am



looking forward to a rewarding and challenging career as part of this amazing community. Eagle Rock might have needed me to fill the role of registrar, but I also need Eagle Rock to fill a void in my life."

Anastacia says, "Professionally, I am looking forward to enhancing my interpersonal skill set. I really look forward to becoming not only a positive influence on the students lives, but also someone that they feel comfortable seeking out for guidance."

In her free time Anastacia explains, "If I am not sleeping, I can be found skiing, running, or working out in the gym. Currently, I am attempting to complete P90X... as they say if it doesn't kill me it will only make me stronger.... or so I hope!!! I also like to keep in touch with friends and family around the world, curl up with a good book, or relax while watching my latest disc

from Netflix."

As Adjunct Wilderness Instructor, Marya will be working with the new student orientation program both on the 24-day wilderness course as well as with on-campus classes such as 201. She will also be assisting in supporting the adventure based classes on campus, helping manage the logistical preparations for wilderness, managing the wilderness shed, developing our new student curriculum and helping maintain our accreditation with AEE. That, alongside the other roles that Instructors take on at this school such as being a part of a house team, advisories and various committees such as the Risk Management Committee.

Marya was born in West St. Paul, Minnesota, and lived there for 18 years until she graduated high school. She's also lived in Maine, North Carolina, South Florida and Chile. Currently, she lives down the St. Vrain canyon in downtown Lyons.

Marya did her undergraduate studies at Bowdoin College in Maine as well as the Universidad de Chile, Macul Campus, in Santiago, Chile. She double majored in Spanish and Sociology. This past December she earned her Masters degree in Experiential Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

For the past five years Marya worked primarily for North Carolina Outward Bound School. While there, she instructed five to 76-day wilderness based courses for 14 to 69 year-olds. She worked in the Appalachian Mountains,

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functional" rating for how we use our resources as well as how we communicate with our stakeholders.

At the end of the report out the team gave the school required actions. Eagle Rock was only given one required action to be completed over the next two years. We are now looking towards the future to work on creating and writing a school improvement plan.

The team also pointed out what we are doing well. They highlighted how everyone who works at Eagle Rock is focused on the students. This results in the

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"It reaffirmed for me what we're doing in Talladega County is working," Ball said. "For a county that has quite a bit of at-risk kids, it's working."

With about 96 students enrolled in EHS, and about eight students in each classroom, the school provides students with a very close-knit residential campus right in the middle of a mountain town with no cell phone reception.

"Students are there from a variety of backgrounds and some from unimaginable situations," Ball said in the February 2011 edition of Honda's "Associate News Magazine."

"Even with kids here at home in our own schools, teachers don't always know what a child is facing when they go home everyday. At Eagle Rock, the key is building relationships and establishing a connection."

An internal study conducted in 2002 concluded that 88 percent of all entering students earned a diploma from ERS, a diploma from another school, or a G.E.D.

It was also reported that over 60 percent of ERS graduates attend college, and 20 percent of them have graduated.

Over 150 students representing over 30 states have earned diplomas as of 2010.

The school is fully funded by American Honda Motor Company and equally divided with boys and girls, with 50 percent being from Colorado and 50 percent from out-of-state.

Ball shared with the audience the different style of curriculum EHS offers its students, with classes such as "intellectual discipline" that address disciplinary and behavioral problems and their "pass or no pass" grading system.

"Is this something we can take back to Talladega County? No. But is this something we can take pieces of? Yes," Ball said.

Those pieces included the 21st century learning

entire community working to improve our students both academically and personally. They also highlighted how we use our resources well and that everyone within the community is able to have a voice to express their opinion. Their final finding highlights how everyone here shares loyalty and ownership towards the community.

While Eagle Rock is thrilled with the findings of the accreditation team we also recognize that this is a starting place from where we can continue to develop a community that best supports our students and sets them up to succeed both at Eagle Rock and in the world at large.

curriculum that has taken hold of Talladega County school classrooms.

Ball found that EHS had already incorporated project-based learning into their curriculum, and found it beneficial to the students.

"Their art classes were mixed with writing and that's where Talladega County is headed," Ball said.

"Project-based learning is doing what Eagle Rock is doing and that is to keep these kids interested. It turns into real life across the board."

Ball also touched on how important counseling was both at EHS and in Talladega County schools. She said that far too often, athletes and straight-A students, as well as the class clowns, get the teacher's attention.

Ball said that not enough attention is devoted to the students who sit in the back of the classroom and may not be involved in clubs and activities but still do their work and make good grades.

Ball said that all students need someone to talk to and make them feel cared about.

She said that LHS has developed a mentoring program called Link Up where a student is linked up with a specific group of peers and a teacher mentor when they enter the 9th grade.

Groups meet regularly to share questions and fears from the time they enter high school up until the time they graduate.

"In Talladega County we're really trying to push these kids to go above what society expects from them," Ball said.

Ball said that the Talladega County School System does have at-risk students just as EHS does, and that bringing pieces of her experience back home could help both students and teachers in the long run

"It's really reprogramming, that you don't need your gang members, that with the right training you can get through this," Ball said.

"It teaches them how to be a responsible citizen."

REFLECTIONS OF A FORMER PUBLIC ALLIES TEACHING FELLOW

by John Gillum, former Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Human Performance



I no longer know a single current student at Eagle Rock School. I have lost track of which ER trimester it currently is. I do not know if my beloved Spruce House is still the team with a humble intramurals record yet overflowing with team spirit. Yes, it has also been a few years since I last visited that special place in the mountains where I spent one experience-rich year in 2005-2006. Yet, Eagle Rock School & Professional Development Center is still very much a part of who I am. Although at the time I knew I was gaining valuable experience, having a few years of separation has given me a new perspective on exactly what I gained as the Human Performance Fellow during ER 37-39. At Eagle Rock School, we were taught to focus our teaching on the big ideas, which students can transfer to different situations years out. What follows are the big nuggets of learning that I gleaned from my Fellowship, which still impact that way I live my life five years later.

First, athletics create better people. The founding faculty at Eagle Rock School knew this when they set aside one-half of a day each week for intramurals. Athletics is

in many ways a microcosm of society. There are team dynamics to navigate, rules to follow, goals to set, and challenges to overcome. During my time helping to organize the intramurals program I saw athletics be a catalyst for personal growth for a variety of students as well as teachers. I saw hotheaded students and teachers practice restraint during controversial calls. I observed students who were struggling socially make connection with teammates as they strived towards a common goal. On a weekly basis I saw students learn new skills and gain confidence in themselves that is transferable beyond the sports field. I have always appreciated the role of athletics in my own life, but it took Eagle Rock School intramurals to see the impact athletics can have on others. Now, as a Physical Education and Health teacher in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, I strive to utilize sport to make my students not only better movers, but better people.

Secondly, excellent communication skills are paramount and should be taught. Prior to my Fellowship, I would never have expected that improving the way I communicate with others would be one of the most valuable lessons I would learn. It sounds so simple. After all, I already knew how to speak. However, upon meeting Jacques, the communication and wilderness guru at Eagle Rock, I learned that communication was much more nuanced than I thought. I had never thought about the implications of saying “you could” rather than “you should.” Nor was I comfortable giving and receiving feedback

in the way that seemed commonplace at Eagle Rock. There are a lot of learned skills which make one a better communicator, and I appreciate the intentionality Eagle Rock gives to teaching communication, a word many schools only give lip-service to. In my relationships since, personal or professional, I’ve often thought to myself, I wish they had the same learning experiences I had as a Fellow.

The final big picture nugget of wisdom I gained from my Fellowship is the importance of being a life-long learner. As I look around, the most obvious common thread amongst happy and successful people I know is the desire to grow and learn. If the teacher is only able to pass on content knowledge without sparking interest and developing inquisitive attitudes, learning will end at the end of the class. It is the teacher who has fostered students with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge who is the true master educator. Being a life-long learner is a contagious attitude and Eagle Rock School is bursting with it. I am delighted to say that I caught the lifelong learner attitude during my Fellowship and hope to pass it on to my students.

When I contemplate all that I learned as a Fellow, it is overwhelming how much it impacted me, both professionally and personally. This excites me, as I know that each year more and more students and Fellows move on from Eagle Rock with the desire and ability to make this world a better place. And although the lessons are life-long, there is nothing like the rejuvenation of hope that one receives upon visiting the Rock. I think it’s time for a road trip!

GONZO JOURNALISM ARTICLE FEATURES HEAD OF SCHOOL

by Nyeema Lee, student

During this five-week class, students in Gonzo Journalism focused on reading and writing in-depth personality profiles. Students learned to read like writers and identify the techniques good journalists used to engage their audience.

The first time I ever saw Robert Burkhardt I said to myself "this old man scares me with his eyebrows." I refused to apply at first, but I put my fears aside and applied to Eagle Rock School and was luckily accepted. When I first got to Eagle Rock I didn't see Robert until Monday morning's gate run. He was wearing a blue and purple Eagle Rock fleece sweater, black North Face hat, black fleece pants and sneakers. "Pick 'em up, put 'em down," Robert told us instead of the traditional "on your mark, get set, GO!" But this was no race, just morning exercise.

Robert grew up in rural upstate New York, in the country. He has a twin brother, an older and a younger sister and all four of them are very close in age. Robert and his siblings grew up with his cousins. They played in the woods and ran around a lot. "We didn't have any money either, but I had two loving parents so that was important," said Robert. I guess growing up with two great parents

was better than money. In school as a child Robert was eager but up against VERY smart peers.

Growing up poor didn't hold Robert back. He received a scholarship to Princeton and also worked his entire way through. Attending Princeton University, Teachers College, Columbia University, and Union Graduate School Robert soon came to realize that he loved teaching. After graduating with a B.A., M.A., and later a PhD, he signed up for Peace Corps." They told me I was going to be a English teacher in northern Iran, up near the Caspian Sea," said Robert. He was assigned to an agricultural training center. Shortly after that he became an English teacher and loved teaching. Once he returned he was offered a job teaching in his hometown.

I asked Robert "what made you want to open up Eagle Rock School?"

"Honda made the decision to open Eagle Rock; I am fortunate enough to serve as the first Head of School." Replied Robert. But what would Honda want with a guy like Robert? What was so special about him? According to Robert, Honda did research, and met a guy name Rick Guttenberg. Guttenberg,

a teacher recommended Robert to be head of school. It was as simple as that.

Robert thought it was weird to get a cold call from Honda, a car company. They asked if he would like to serve as the first head of school. It was too good of an offer to pass up.

Before Robert was actually chosen, he was the Director of the Conservation Corps in San Francisco. There he

does a number of things. He enjoys talking to his dog Gussy, a golden retriever. Robert's favorite thing to do besides teaching is playing the tenor horn, listening to jazz and classical music. But to get off campus, Robert attends the movies and attends the Colorado rapids soccer games.

"Is Eagle Rock School what you envisioned it to be?"

Looking out to the students at Eagle Rock (the



was working with 18-23 year olds of many races and ethnicities. They did Public Service projects all over the city. Robert worked there for seven years before serving as the founding head of school at ERS.

Robert's whole life isn't ERS. When school isn't in session Robert

community), Burkhardt simply replied by saying "Community." He knows and understands the problems that the community has but he wanted young people at his school that wanted to struggle to make themselves into better people. I think by making the choice to attend Eagle Rock I've proven to Robert

"Gozno" - Continued from Page 9

I'm ready for change, and have a struggle in my life that's bettering me.

Seeing kids work hard, grow, and prosper seems to excite a 70 year old like Robert Burkhardt. I wonder what Robert would change about Eagle Rock if he could. "I can't change it, only they can, but I would want more students to grab hold of their lives and not make poor choices that get them sent home." It seems like it's up to the students to make the decisions and differences at Eagle Rock. Robert explained that he love," Seeing students succeed: graduating, performing for the community, presenting to the community and serving the larger public."

Robert seems to be drawn to students who know what they want in life and going for it. Being a student here at Eagle Rock School, I think Burkhardt has had a very great impact on students with the traditions he's started. From meeting him at an open house about Eagle Rock to actually attending his school he seems to want students that want to change and better themselves. Says Burkhardt "I wanted young people here who wanted a struggle to make themselves an even better person and become even more successful; and I think we got that." I simply agreed.

After hearing that I wondered, "Where do I fit at in the community?" "What would Robert like for me to work on while at ERS?"

Robert told me "we built Eagle Rock just for you Nyeema. I see you blossoming. And I'm looking forward to a year from now when you are helping to run this community. You will probably make mistakes like I make mistakes, and get over it. We all make mistakes. But I'm happy you're here and that I've helped to create something that I look to be a positive impact on your life."

While at Eagle Rock, Robert wishes for others like me to use the talent we have and develop leadership skills. One way of doing this is through activity commitments that teach and inspire the community.

I wondered how could I serve ERS? According to Robert, I must "Find a need and fill it."

Here at Eagle Rock School there's a program called Life After Eagle Rock (LAER), so I wondered what would Eagle Rock be after Robert is gone. Will Eagle Rock progress, stay where it's at, or go down the drain? I bet Robert Burkhardt would want things to stay the same or maybe even progress.

Robert can't stay at Eagle Rock forever but we know his legacy will live on strong." I want the students to lead, I want them to show the new students what to do, how it's done and have leadership," says Burkhardt. Since Robert started many rituals and plans great things, we (the students) should begin a program to make sure Robert's legacy lives on. We can call it Life After Robert Burkhardt.

"New Staff" - Continued from Page 6

the Outer Banks, the Florida Everglades and the Patagonian region of Chile and Argentina. She was also a course director, staff trainer and whitewater canoeing specialist.

Marya was the Public Allies Teaching Fellow in World Languages six years ago. During that fellowship she helped develop Eagle Rock's Spanish and Service Learning trip to northern Guatemala with Russ Rendon, the World Languages Instructional Specialist at the time. Marya stated, "It was a spectacular trip and I returned to Eagle Rock two years later to work that course again. After that, I returned to Eagle Rock in ER-43 to work my first wilderness trip with the school. Last fall, after completing my Masters, I returned again to lead another wilderness course and this spring became full-time staff."

Marya explains, "It feels incredibly good to be back here. I am always amazed at the example Eagle Rock sets as a place that strives to teach people from all walks of life how to live, learn and grow together. I am very

excited to be a part of this again, especially as a wilderness instructor where I get to have a foundational role in this cross-cultural understanding experience for new students at the very beginning of their Eagle Rock careers."

Marya says, "I have a penchant for learning, which I consider a gift, and am very excited at how Eagle Rock encourages this of their instructors. The first learning I am looking forward to working on professionally is to gain a deeper understanding of transitions for young adults and how we may be able to better facilitate these transitions at Eagle Rock."

In her free time she explains, "On active days, I ski in the winter and whitewater canoe in the summer. I've just begun to get to know a small but strong open boating community here in the front range and am excited to spend the summer exploring the rivers of Colorado. I also enjoy taking advantage of the musical community of Lyons and am starting to teach myself the banjo again. On less active days I enjoy good coffee with either good friends or a good read."

READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

by Dave Manzella, Literacy & Literature Instructional Specialist

When Zev Vernon-Lapow was hired as this year's Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Societies and Cultures, he was a bit surprised to find out he would also be required to teach reading.

"I didn't know I was going to focus on the skill of reading as much as the content," Vernon-Lapow explained. "I was surprised at first, but it totally made sense," he added.

This is not a coincidence, but a strategic plan for improving literacy at Eagle Rock. Reading strategies are being taught to students in every course.

Last years, a core group of ERS instructors and administrators met to identify key areas to focus on improving instruction. The members formed a Critical Friends Group (CFG) as a means of reflecting on how best to deliver professional development to ERS staff. The CFG identified Literacy as a key component to increasing student achievement.

Beth Ellis, Learning Resources and Information Instructional Specialist, and several members of the CFG, attended a conference on professional development during the summer of 2010 and saw many other schools focusing on improving reading amongst their students. Ellis found that many schools across the country are focusing their energy on reading. "In order to be a good writer, you also need to be a good reader," Ellis explained.

Beginning in the fall of 2010, all instructional meetings were focused around improving reading instruction at ERS. Through direct instruction, members of the Professional Development CFG shared before, during, and after reading strategies that could be used in all courses.

Instructors were then asked to implement these strategies and gather student work for future review.

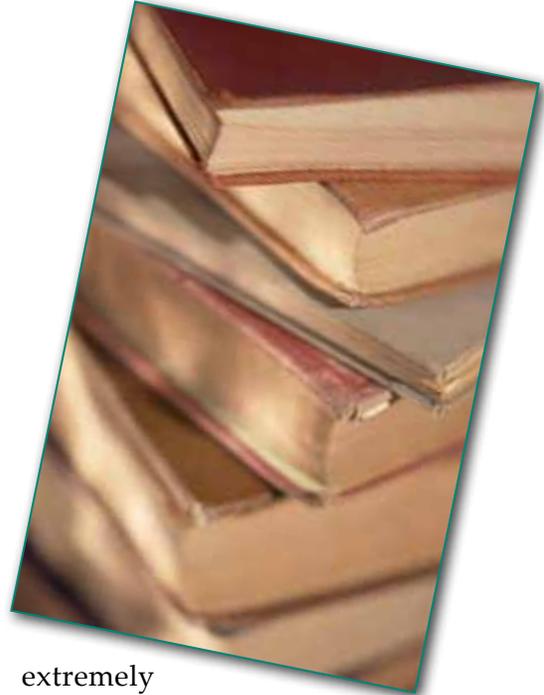
One strategy that Vernon-Lapow has used in a journalism course is called *Sketching Through the Text*. This strategy helps students focus on the images good readers create as they read. Students drew pictures to represent what they visualized as they read an article called *Peak-a-boo Paradox*, about a children's entertainer named The Great Zucchini.

Vernon-Lapow learned about this strategy during an Instructional meeting where different strategies were studied in a small group format. Instructors were then asked to plan and implement a lesson using the strategy. Each small group reconvened at a later meeting to discuss the outcomes.

Students reacted well to the experience. Taber Lathrop said, "It was interesting to literally sketch it instead of just keeping it in my head." Lathrop found that the strategy actually made the pictures more vivid. He added, "It is not necessarily as vivid while you are reading, but then once you really think about what that looks like it paints a more detailed picture in your mind."

Thu "Mimi" Huynh also enjoyed the experience and found that she really could visualize the characters. She said, "It made me picture it out more. I could describe the Great Zucchini without ever meeting him."

At the next Instructional Meeting, Vernon-Lapow shared his experience using the strategy. "A strategy like *Sketching* doesn't necessarily record direct information but if it helping the students visualize as they are reading, I think it is



extremely effective," Vernon-Lapow explained.

Through this cycle of instruction, implementation, and reflection, instructors are finding ways to make the reading strategies fit all courses at ERS. Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development explained, "We look for patterns and try to learn how to take the abstract strategies and make them real and practical at ERS."

Soguero has found that overall students are responding well to the literacy focus especially the structure it has provided. He finds that students appreciate well-planned instruction that includes clear expectations, modeling, and tools like notebooks and graphic organizers.

Soguero also hopes that students will not only learn to read and write better, but that they will also be more happily engaged in the process. Although Lathrop wasn't

GRADUATE INSPIRES OTHERS

The following letter was received by Eagle Rock graduate Angel Flores on April 7, 2011 and portions are being reprinted with permission from the author, Carmen Garcia-Harris.

I don't know if you will remember me; my name is Carmen, and I am Eric Harris & Beth Jackson's mom. I am writing to you to congratulate you on your upcoming Graduation on April 8! I am also writing to share with you one way you have inspired others well beyond Eagle Rock School.

I was present for your August 2009 Presentation of Learning. I was on campus for Eric's POL that fall and I was also a panel participant for some students. A colleague of mine from Indiana was at these POL's as well.

During your POL that fall, a panel member asked you this question. She asked, "What is it that we need to do in our high schools to support students like you?" I thought it was a difficult question, but you had no trouble offering an immediate response. It is that response that prompts me to write to you, because I work with schools in Indiana to help teachers and staff learn positive strategies that will better support their students. Your response was, "Check in with me! Ask me how I'm doing. Ask me if I need anything."

I will not forget this. Your response, Angel, was a powerful message that you may not even realize. Our public high school teachers are under a lot of pressure to make sure students are performing well academically and do well on standardized tests. Yet they often forget because of this pressure, that the first and most important element to academic success is building a positive relationship with their students. Every single student, no matter their strength or challenges, no matter their background, must feel safe, welcomed, and successful in their school environment. At ERS, the

very foundational principles upon which the school operates offers this. While I know from my experiences with Eric and from Beth's experiences as a staff member, that being at ERS can sometimes be difficult, I also know that every single student's voice is valued, and every single student has positive personal relationships with teachers and staff. It is part of the culture of the school. It should be part of the culture of every single school in our country. It is not always this way, obviously. Thus why Eagle Rock is also a Professional Development Center, where teachers from around the country can learn from the ERS experiences.

In my work in Indiana schools, my colleague and I have shared your message during our training sessions with high school teachers and administrators across our state. Your response was so immediate and so easy for you to formulate; that is why it was such a powerful message. I want you to know that your words have effected in a positive way, how these schools are reformulating the strategies they use with students, in remembering and practicing building positive relationships with every single student whose lives they touch.

I offer my sincere congratulations to you on your upcoming graduation from Eagle Rock School. I wish you the absolute best of luck as you move forward in your studies if you plan on going to college or in whatever next steps you choose. I am making a donation to the Higher Education Fund in your honor this year Angel. Thank you for the hard work you have done, the successes you have created, and thank you for inspiring teachers who have heard your voice from afar!

"Reading" - Continued on Page 11

aware that good readers actually use different strategies, he is now recognizing how he uses them even when he's not in class. Recently he read *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and explained, "The whole time, it was like I was watching them on TV. It was though I was sort of there too."

Besides improving students reading abilities, instructors also hope that the strategies improve students' engagement with their course themes. Vernon-Lapow said, "I hope that reading strategies are being used to help spur curiosity and critical thinking."

Using the strategy *Say Anything* in the course *The Power of One*, Lathrop said he has definitely been more engaged.

The literacy focus should have impact that reaches far beyond Eagle Rock as fellows finish out the year and move on to public and private schools throughout the country. Vernon-Lapow plans on using reading strategies wherever his future teaching career takes him. "I think I will implement strategies as a teacher forever," he said.

EAGLE ROCK STUDENTS WIN PRESIDENTIAL SERVICE AWARD

by Kari Liotta, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Service Learning



The following article appeared in the April 8, 2011 edition of the [Estes Park Trail Gazette](#) and is being reprinted with permission.

During Eagle Rock School's graduation on Friday, April 8, Cody Lessar and Alberto Chavez-Hernandez were the first students in history of Eagle Rock to be presented with the Presidential Service Award. This prestigious national honor is offered in recognition of their commitment to volunteerism on and off campus. Cody and Alberto each documented and submitted more than 100 hours of service in order to receive the award. Examples of their service include Kitchen Patrol, chores, nightly clean-up, a service trip to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and various other activities.

In the fall of 2010, Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center teamed with hundreds of organizations and businesses across the country to deliver this Award to our most outstanding volunteers. As a certifying organization of the President's Volunteer Service Award, Eagle Rock can nominate potential recipients and distribute the award to those who meet or exceed the award criteria. Every student at Eagle Rock is eligible for the award and may receive it by documenting and submitting their service hours.

Established in 2003, this award is given by the President of the United States and honors individuals, families and groups who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to volunteer service over the course of 12 months. The President's Volunteer Service Award is issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation -- created by President George W. Bush, to recognize the valuable contributions volunteers make to the nation. To learn more about this award, visit presidentalserviceawards.gov.



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STUDENTS MEET WITH HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

by Zev Vernon-Lapow, Public Allies Teaching Fellow in Societies and Cultures

Judy Urman was born in Germany and managed to escape with her family in 1938. As Jews, the social conditions were becoming increasingly inhospitable. Her family took a four-month journey to Shanghai, China, which was then occupied by the Japanese. The Urmans were moved to a ghetto, where they remained for 6 years.

On March 3rd, eight ERS students who were in a class about the Holocaust and Human Behavior went to Denver to meet with a Mrs. Urman. The class was adapted from a curriculum designed by the organization *Facing History and Ourselves*, who hosted the event.

The course, taught by Berta Guillen, Societies and Cultures Instructional Specialist, helped students identify the choices that individuals make in difficult circumstances. The holocaust is an extreme example of many individuals perpetuating choices that contribute to fear and hate. Lessons from the holocaust can be applied to our lives by thinking about the roles that victims, perpetrators, bystanders and up standers play in all aspects of violence.

The goal of the meeting was to help students put a face on history. But Urman cautioned students that her story was hers' alone. "Every story is different," Urman said. "Even if two people survived in the same place."

Mrs. Urman's story was different from that of her husband Ernie Urman, a fellow survivor who she met in the Shanghai ghetto. They came to the United States together after they were married.

Recently the Urmans returned to Germany, where they spoke with high school students. In Mrs. Urman's hometown they created a prize for students who conducted the best independent research projects about the holocaust.

"What happened, happened," Mr. Urman said. "We created a foundation for young people to research what had happened so they could draw their own conclusions. We felt this was something we could do for the future."

For Urman, re-telling the past is a way for her

history to live on.

"These are things you never forget," she said.

Before the visit students expressed excitement at getting to meet a survivor. But one student, Alberto Chavez, expressed concern. "It sounds like we are going to see someone in a zoo, like we have to see the survivors before they die."

Chavez recognizes a truth about the nature of survivors, that many of them are now elderly. Without



sharing their stories, their experiences may die with them. These stories are abundant with lessons of the possibilities of human experience (lessons of both hope and of wretchedness).

For student Eduardo Velasco the visit was eye-opening because it connected academic learning to a real person, "It gives a better understanding of the class," Velasco said. "It made it more real."

Isaac Baer, another student, had a similar reaction. For Baer, the meeting was a highlight of the class. "I realized how far the holocaust reached and how many people it affected," Baer said.

After visiting with Urman, Chavez's stance changed as well. The meeting reminded him of a Native American ceremony where young people meet with elders to learn life lessons.

"I learned that people go through a lot of things," Chavez said. "But they keep on going."

SEVEN MORE GRADUATES TAKE FLIGHT

by Jeanine Cerundolo, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development

Having come all the way from Central High School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, **Jon'Ya Crawford** had been a proud member of Piñon House at Eagle Rock. She liked the small classes compared to her old school where "I wasn't taught the importance of education, my teachers didn't mind if I failed; and I saw it as a free pass to do whatever I wanted." Her guidance counselor let her know about Eagle Rock and she has taken many memories with her, such as: playing the Queen of Fairies in 'A Midsummer Nights Dream'; advisories at Robert's house drinking his famous Berry Smoothies; and a balance between getting high quality work done and taking much needed naps after tiring intramural games. Through her time at ERS, Jon'Ya said she felt a personal transformation occur. "When I came to Eagle Rock I was able to find my passion: Education. I now accept that as long as I'm living my passion and I have a positive impact on others, I'll be happier than people who throw away their passions for monetary gain." After graduation, Jon'Ya plans to work at Rocky Mountain National Park for the summer

season with the Maintenance Crew, and save up money for college in the fall to major in Secondary Education. Her advice to current students is to "Take advantage of every opportunity, even if you don't think it's your type. Be grateful for everything from the many KP's, disagreements, community meetings; everything has its purpose; it's all

a learning experience. You'll never be able to experience being an Eagle Rock student again, so: ENJOY IT!"

Coming to ERS from the city of Pacoima in the San Fernando Valley, of Los Angeles, **Angel Flores** spent his time at ERS in Aspen House. He said he came to Eagle Rock "because I was tired of not doing anything with my life. I was at a point in my life where I didn't see a future in what I was doing. I wanted to leave the valley and begin somewhere new." Some of his favorite moments were going camping to the hot sulfur springs with Beth and Janet; playing soccer and ultimate on the field of dreams during the summer; and taking journeys into the wilderness for life changing experiences. Angel allowed his time at ERS to shape him. He said: "I have become more aware of who I am and who I want to be. Before

have because those are the things that are going to keep you from being happy. Instead, live in the moment so you can focus on what's happening now."

Rafael McLeod came to ERS from Las Vegas, New Mexico and lived in Ponderosa House. He stated that public school wasn't working for him and that he wasn't getting the support he needed in order to succeed in school. Three of his favorite memories were: the run in, getting an internship at the park, and battles between the boys and girls wing. Throughout his time at ERS, Rafael says he felt that his leadership skills improved, as well as his ability to finish work. He grew by developing his work ethic and making headway towards his goals, both academic and personal. A caring individual, he would like to be remembered as the person

who always was willing to help, whether it was an emergency or not. His plans for after graduation are to work at Rocky Mountain National Park on Trails Crew or for the Hot Shot Fire crew. He advised current students: "take advantage of all

the help that is offered here as well as all the opportunities that this school offers." Rafael says that ERS has been so special to him because of the community and the bonding that goes on, "especially in my P-rose house, and boys wing, - we are all family."



ERS, I didn't know anything about myself." After graduation, Angel plans to go to Connecticut and work for a Wilderness school for the summer and then begin school in the fall. He shares the wisdom he has gained with new students, saying: "Be present. Don't worry about things that are going on back home or the things that ERS doesn't

"Graduates" - Continued from Page 15

Hailing from Orange County, NY, **Natalie Osorio**, spent her time at ERS as a proud member of Piñon House. She identified as a free spirit and stated that traditional school did not support her as an individual, whereas she gained much personal growth at ERS. She said: "At Eagle Rock I have gained ability to accept others' flaws, listen, accept feedback, and lead in a respectful manor. My entire mind set has changed and I have been transformed into a lifelong steward of the planet. I no longer am easily influenced by peers or the media, what drives my passions is from the heart." After graduation, Natalie will be working in Rocky Mountain National Park as a Seasonal Ranger- Park Guide, and then begin an exciting chapter of her life at Global College in Costa Rica. Natalie advised: "Open up to this place and the beauty of growth will follow." Natalie left behind several calming art pieces that she hoped would settle students' minds in stressful times. She also took many fond memories with her, such as: climbing a hidden water fall in a canyon while on GILA wilderness and seeing amazing views; getting over her fear of skiing...and then crashing through a fence! and exploring the full 640 acres of land on "adventure hikes" with her best friend, Meme. "ERS is my family," Natalie commented. "It amazing how much they believe in each and every single student even when the light isn't shining so bright. My ERS family transformed me into a strong independent young lady who is ready to take on the world."

Meshach "Alex" Ramirez, came to ERS from Lincoln, NE in January of 2006. He said that his educational background prior to Eagle Rock wasn't the best. "Racism, constant degradation, and a strong repulsion was how I saw the education system and I hated it. Then I came to

Eagle Rock, and all that changed." Alex lived in Lodgepole House and fondly remembers: Acting in A Midsummer Night's Dream, DJ'ing in the Loft, and "various deep/hilarious/meaningful conversations and interactions with staff and students throughout my career." Alex stated that he had changed in many different ways over his time at the Rock, with his major personal growth being his personality. "Before, I was an extremely introverted, shy, and anti-social. Now, I am a very social, confident person who can handle both leadership and 'followership' roles. I love meeting new people," he said. Immediately after graduating, Alex plans to continue his education by going to SCC (Southeast Community College) in Lincoln, NE. He also hopes to come up to Denver, CO for a few months and continuing his DJ Career. Alex plans to visit ERS as often as possible and keep in touch with many staff & students as well. He encourages other students that: "Graduation is in no way impossible. Especially up here, where all you have to do is engage, participate, grow, and graduate. Eagle Rock is an amazing place. Just wait till you're in my shoes. Keep pushing, stay strong. Remember: You do Eagle Rock, not the other way around."

Gigi "Ana" Rivera came to ERS from Pasadena, California. She said she needed a school that would challenge her since: "public school was not enough for me." Gigi enjoyed her time at Piñon House and had some fond memories from her time there. Among them are: "hiding from the duty team when it is wing curfew and scaring them, the ER-52 slide show when Saul said: "I'm gonna miss you, Gigi," (it was so cute!), and getting pie in the face by Jon A. on my birthday before eating the cake!" Gigi said she had definitely grown and changed since being at ERS. Improving her communication

skills, she became more comfortable talking with people she was not familiar with. In addition, "I have learned to look at the big picture of things and not be so narrow minded. I also learned self-discipline and how to create and make healthy life choices for myself and others around me." After graduation, Gigi will be working in the park for the summer then go to Central America to visit family, and attend community college. Her advice to other Eagle Rockers is: "Ask yourself why are you here and don't give up on ER so easily! You got this!" For Gigi, the community, classes, the instructors, KP, the houses, Robert, and the Props Box were ERS traditions and people she could not easily forget.

Hailing from South Los Angeles, California, **David Sanchez** came to ERS because he wanted a better education and living style. He found that he had too many negative habits in Los Angeles and it wasn't working for him. David lived in Spruce House for about two years, then, after being suspended from school, he returned and lived in Piñon House. One way David had changed since arriving to ERS is that he left his old life style and grew "from a kid to a young man." He said that he no longer looks to the streets for solutions. He also learned how to control his emotions. He said: "Before, I would look for arguments and fights. That's until I realized that I was pushing a lot of good people away from my life." He stated that ERS has the power to change your life if you let it. It certainly changed his. After graduating, David will be going on a CCC (California Conservation Corps) outdoor trip for six months. Then he plans to attend a community college. His parting advice to other students is: "Don't let people tell you it's not possible. Anything is possible if you believe it."

GRADUATE PROFILE – WHERE IS HE NOW?

by Jeanine Cerundolo, Public Allies Fellow in Professional Development

“A ship in harbor is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for” - John A Shedd

Coming from Cleveland, Matt came to ERS in ER-16, and graduated in ER-24. To him, staying motivated at ERS was essential because it was his new home. Matt says, “Unlike most students I didn’t have a home outside of Eagle Rock. Before Eagle Rock I was on the streets. When other students went home on break, I went back to the street, sleeping on floors, couches and struggling to eat. Eagle Rock seemed like paradise.” Living in P-rose, he appreciated many things about life at the Rock. Some of his favorite memories were hanging out with his “Ponderosa brethren,” and teaching classes (such as one on Indo-Chinese History with an emphasis on the Vietnam war, another on the History of Politics, and one on Community Problem-Solving). His personal growth at ERS gave him many insights, for example: “The more one learns the more one changes,” he says. “It’s not that the person tries to change or wants to necessarily. Simply, the more a person learns about the world we live in

the more their perspective changes. I learned a lot at Eagle Rock.” Matt says that the biggest life lesson he learned while at ERS is “that life is what you make it.”



And Matt practices exactly what he preaches. After graduating, he took off on a grand adventure, riding a bicycle alone through Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. What he has now decided to make of his time and his passions is to pursue a sailing trip to circumnavigate the Americas through the Northwest Passage, beginning this summer, in August. Matt had spent his time in Annapolis working with “CRAB” (Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating), an organization that helps provide boating opportunities to people with disabilities. CRAB donated a 27’ Albin-Vega boat to him for his adventure and reciprocally, the money he raises from his trip will be donated to CRAB. His journey of 23,000 miles will be a non-stop adventure lasting approximately 10 and 1/2 months. Matt is an avid sailor who has taken many interesting voyages, but the ambitious one he is now attempting has never been done by another person before. Matt believes in the phrase “Reward lives in the house of risk” and is ready for the challenge. “It’s going to be epic,” he says.

His time at ERS has prepared and led Matt to the point where he finds himself today. He admits, “If it wasn’t for Eagle Rock my whole life would be different. I imagine I would be dead or in prison. Eagle Rock is like very fertile soil, but only I could plant the seed.” In the future, Matt would like to complete his next sailing trip. He reports that he has been meeting with the US ambassador to Gambia because he is trying to start a program that gives school supplies to children grades 1-6 in Gambia. He believes it will take him a few more years to do this. Besides giving back to his global community, Matt says, “Ultimately, I would like to find a woman I can grow old with and have some kids.” We wish Matt well in his endeavors and dreams.

Matt Rutherford, ER-16
(Fall, 1998)
Graduated ER-24 (Summer, 2001)
Geography: Annapolis, MD