CASTAWAYS CLASS OFFERS CHANCE TO LEARN ABOUT HOMELESSNESS ———

by Kathryn Sharpe, Intern

In an effort to address the issue of homelessness in America, Karolee McLaughlin, Music Adjunct Instructor, and Kathryn Sharpe, Intern, designed a class called Castaways. Offered during the first six weeks of ER 17, Castaways used civics, music, experiential activities, field trips and service projects to immerse students in the issue of homelessness.

Students explored such major questions as: Why are people homeless? Who is homeless? Why does homelessness become a cycle that traps people? How can we teach about it through musical performance? And, ultimately, what can we do to help?

During the course, students visited several agencies in Estes Park that serve the rural homeless population such as Crossroads Ministries (an emergency services outreach program) and Harvest House (a safehouse for women and children). They also listened to speakers from Habitat for Humanity and the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Then, to experience the contrast between rural and urban situations, they visited Denver for a weekend. While there, they visited agencies such as the Gathering Place (a day shelter for women and children), the Urban Peak (a shelter for homeless youth), the Denver Voice (a newspaper created entirely by homeless people), and Women in Motion (a mutual support and empowerment group of women living in poverty).

During these visits, students focused on the underlying causes and effects of homelessness in various contexts, but they also spent significant time learning about the ways individuals, organizations, and communities respond to the problem. Responses varied from talking about the value of interpersonal, supportive relationships to discovering opportunities for volunteering to building creative organizations that respond to demonstrated needs.

To further the service component, students volunteered in Denver with first graders at Wyman Elementary School (an inner-city school serving many families who are either homeless or on the edge), served dinner at Urban Peak, and distributed groceries with an outreach ministry to individuals and families on Colfax Avenue. These experiences gave students the opportunity to “put a human face” on the otherwise abstract idea of homelessness and allowed them to give back some of the energy and generosity which so many people had given when sharing their lives and stories.

The culmination of the class was for students to create and perform a musical to educate the Eagle Rock community about homelessness. The production was an adaptation of the musical “Castaways.” Students used some of the original songs, but they wrote a new play to set them in. They shaped the production so that it incorporated many of the things they had learned in the class as well as some of the experiences they had encountered in person.

In addition to the musical itself telling the story of a group of homeless people and their lives, the students did informative presentations at the end. These further taught the audience about the complex issues of homelessness, particularly the relationship to domestic violence, hunger and runaway youth.

See “Castaways” - Page 2

REPORT ON THE GRADUATE HIGHER EDUCATION FUND ———

by Dick Herb, Director of Operations

The Next Graduate Workday. A growing number of parents, alums, and friends of ERS have joined in to help with spring clean-up for Estes Park families and to earn money for the Graduate Higher Education Fund. If you have time and would like to volunteer to participate in the next Graduate Workday, please call Dick Herb. You’ll be assigned a team of students and jobs to tackle.

Graduates Benefiting From the Graduate Higher Educa-
tion Fund. The word from Eric Sterkel (the latest graduate to receive a scholarship check) as he travels the U.S. and Canada with Up With People is exciting. Eric dances -- nine different routines when we saw his dress rehearsal in February -- and he'll learn four more routines on the road, all fourteen representing different ethnicities and cultures. Haimanot Tesfai (another recipient of a scholarship from the Graduate Higher Education Fund and a fellow trouper with Eric in Up With People) has the first spoken words in the show.

Once they have completed their stateside tour, they will travel the Inland Passage to Alaska and then go to Western Europe and Scandinavia -- a ten-month tour in all.

See “Education Fund” - Page 3
ACCREDITATION TEAM VISITS EAGLE ROCK

by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development

Sunday, March 21, through Wednesday, March 24 were landmark days for Eagle Rock. They were the culmination of a process that began two years ago to accredit the school. Even further back than that, according to Robert Burkhardt, head of school. Eagle Rock was preparing for accreditation, an important outside indicator of the quality of Eagle Rock’s program for students.

This is a joint accreditation with both the North Central Association (NCA) that accredits public schools and the Association of Colorado Independent Schools (ACIS) that accredits independent schools. Almost a year ago, NCA accredited Eagle Rock pending the site visit, but ACIS waits until after a site visit to accredit independent schools. The executive board for ACIS meets in October 1999 to read the recommendations of the visiting team and decide whether or not to accredit Eagle Rock.

The visiting team drew from both public schools and independent schools. Chairs of the team were Mary Lou Faddick, head of Foothills Academy in Denver, representing ACIS; and Randy Sinisi, Executive Director of the North Central Association in Colorado, representing NCA. Team members were Todd Warner, English teacher from Fountain Valley School, an independent school in Colorado Springs; Mario Williams, principal of George Washington High School, a public school in Denver; and Walter H. Daub, head of the Lowell Whiteman School, an independent school in Steamboat Springs. Rhoney DuQuesne, Executive Director of ACIS organized the visit for both NCA and ACIS.

Special events for the team included a dessert and coffee with staff Sunday night and a dinner with Eagle Rock graduates and parents of current and graduate students on Monday night. Otherwise the team participated as much as possible in Eagle Rock activities, attending Gathering and Community Meeting, eating meals with students in the Lodge, visiting classes, and going to activities. When they weren’t visiting classes or going to activities, they were meeting personally with staff who had written parts of the Self-Study Report.

The Self-Study Report was presented to the Visiting Team at the beginning of February. It consisted of individual reports written by staff on the following topics: Community of School (Admissions, Alumni Relations, Parent Organizations and Programs, The Local Community, School Climate and Morale, and Gender and Diversity Issues), Personnel, the Curriculum, Activities (Extracurricular Activities and Organizations, Student Government, Food Service, Residential Program, and the Professional Development Center), Student Services (Counseling and Guidance, Health Services, and School and College Placement), and Governance and Administration (Governing and Decision-Making, Business and Financial Management, and School Facilities).

The reports were written at the conclusion of nearly six months of self study, including examination of data generated through an independent survey of graduates and their parents, “seniors” and their parents, and staff. Results of the survey were analyzed against results from all independent schools that were a part of the Midwest corollary to ACIS. In addition, staff members used the results of Eagle Rock’s own evaluation study (see Fall 1998 issue).

In their exit report before leaving on Wednesday, March 24, chairs Randy Sinisi and Mary Lou Faddick complimented Eagle Rock for having so clear and strong a vision and for having all elements of the school related to that vision. Never, they said, had they seen such a coherent program. They urged Eagle Rock to continue to think about the profile of the successful Eagle Rock student. They also commented on the need to know students’ abilities when they enter Eagle Rock. They encouraged Eagle Rock to continue its work in the Life After Eagle Rock office, helping students transition to college, jobs, service work, or the military. They suggested that there be more orientation of new parents, and that the curriculum be reexamined for scope and sequence. They commented on the stress of working at Eagle Rock, suggesting that more classes be repeated and all staff helped to avoid burn-out.

More comments and specific commendations and recommendations will be forthcoming before the October board meeting when the ACIS Executive Board decides on accreditation. Eagle Rock will have a chance to respond to comments, commendations, and recommendations when the report is received before the October meeting.

“Castaways” - Continued

The students offered ideas for ways that individuals and groups can respond to these problems with proactive steps, ranging from strategies for helping a friend escape from abuse to volunteering or donating to lobbying legislators. With this performance, students not only demonstrated the depth of their own learning but educated the larger community in hopes of building awareness and stimulating action.
PARENTS SAY "TRUST THE PROCESS" AT MARCH FAMILY & SPONSOR WEEKEND

by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development

"It's really a good experience and educative to know how to adapt yourself as a parent to the philosophy of Eagle Rock," stated one parent who attended the March 1999 Family / Sponsor Weekend. Family / Sponsor Weekends are held twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Organized by L’Tanya Perkins, Admissions Associate, and Philbert Smith, Director of Students, the weekend is important, especially because Eagle Rock’s students come from throughout the U.S.

The latest Family / Sponsor Weekend, held Friday, March 26 through Sunday, March 28, provided time for parents or sponsors to be with their Eagle Rock student as well as with other parents and sponsors and the whole school. The event began with dinner on Friday and a welcome to Eagle Rock. On Saturday, parents and sponsors listened in an Open Forum to presentations on the Life After Eagle Rock program, the accreditation process, the business office’s effort to maintain a reserve account for each student, and other areas of interest. During the Open Forum, they also had a chance to ask questions and get answers.

Following a group photo after lunch, parents and sponsors worked to create their own tiles for the tile wall that is being created in the Human Performance Center (HPC). Then they had a chance to watch their student’s Presentation of Learning (POL) video and meet with staff. The highlight for many was the spiritual Gathering on Sunday, March 28, before brunch. The event culminated in a session entitled “What Does Eagle Rock Need From You?”

Some parents shared inspirational thoughts with each other. Said one, “Patience is necessary for one to succeed with humanity; forgiveness of past issues is the only path to future acceptance.”

“The first weeks at Eagle Rock,” stated another, “are difficult for parents and students. Listen to your child, be supportive, but don’t let him or her talk you into coming home. You will all be glad.” “Be willing to give over some parental control to ERS. The staff, collectively, is a great ‘parent,’” said another. An older sister shared her joy that her little brother is “better than he was before. He is loving, respectful, and somewhat less opinionated.”

One evaluation of the weekend included this comment: “It was a really good experience that we are not going to forget. I have my mind at peace because now I am really sure that my son is in good hands...even though I never really had doubts before.” Another offered this advice to parents or sponsors who might be deciding whether or not to attend the next Parent / Sponsor Weekend: “Please come! It’s a great time with your young person – and very informative about the ‘whole’ of Eagle Rock.”

ALUMS COMING TO EAGLE ROCK IN MAY

by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development, and Cristina Paglinuan, Staff, Life After Eagle Rock Office

More than just the graduates of Eagle Rock are invited to the second Eagle Rock Alumni Reunion Weekend May 7-9, 1999. Former staff, interns, and student teachers are expected, as well. The first Alumni Reunion Weekend was held in May 1997 and attended by 16 graduates. Approximately 25 graduates are expected this May, along with 12 former staff, interns, and student teachers.

The event serves a multitude of purposes. Besides providing a time to renew friendships and visit Eagle Rock, the event will allow current staff to meet with alums to gather a wealth of information. For example, graduates will meet with L’Tanya Perkins, Admissions Associate, and Philbert Smith, Director of Students, so L’Tanya and Philbert can learn what has happened to them since leaving Eagle Rock and how the culture of the school has affected them.

Graduates will also meet with Linda Sand Guest, Director of Curriculum, so that she can learn how the curriculum at Eagle Rock has helped or hindered students in the world of work, college, or service after graduation. Former staff and interns will meet with Linda and Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development, to describe what they are doing now and how professional development experiences at Eagle Rock have influenced their careers.

In addition, graduates will talk with current students about their current lives and how Eagle Rock has affected both their personal and professional choices. Graduates and former staff, interns, and student teachers will make tiles that represent them for the Tile Wall that is under permanent construction in the Human Performance Center (HPC).

Not all will be work, however. Planned for fun are an ice cream social, a service project (river clean-up) in Estes Park, a volleyball game that pits the alums against current students and staff, a barbecue and musical jam session, tentatively a slide show and graduate skit, a movie, a cookies and tea social, and a special session of the Writers’ Club. Alums will participate in a spiritual gathering before they leave on Sunday, May 9, and will present their tiles to the community then.

"Education Fund" - Continued

Other recipients include Joe Ledbetter, who is attending the University of San Francisco, and Sita Henninger who gave her award back thanking ERS for the honor but saying, "Please give this to someone who needs this more than I." Sita will be attending Naropa Institute in Boulder in the fall. Eight other awards have been made but are waiting to be claimed when their recipients are ready to use them.

Accounting for the Funds

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CHRIS MASON ASSUMES COUNSELING ROLE AT ERS

by Chris Mason

My name is Chris Mason, and my position at Eagle Rock School is that of Health and Wellness Counselor. I have worked here since January 1999, and was pleased to be able to spend some time with my predecessor, Heather Solar, “learning the ropes” before flying solo.

So far I love being associated with Eagle Rock. As with any “newbie,” I’m still learning about the philosophy and culture here, as well as trying to figure out my role and how I can best serve the community. Without a doubt, this is the most exciting and creative place I’ve ever worked.

My professional training and work experience are in the fields of education and counseling. I taught high school in Commerce City and elementary through high school in Boulder, Colorado. I’ve also worked with other school districts and nonprofit agencies in Colorado. Besides teaching, I have worked as a consultant, counselor, school psychologist, and administrator. One specialty I’ve developed over the years is assessing students of all ages for learning disabilities and attention deficits, as well as for personal and academic strengths.

For the past eight years, I have been working toward earning a doctorate in counseling psychology at Colorado State University. I’m now pleased to say that goal has been accomplished. I will be graduating in May 1999.

For the last two and a half years, I have also maintained a private practice in psychotherapy and assessment in Fort Collins. My youngest client was five and my oldest seventy-five. I have been privileged to work with people from many ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, and income levels. Throughout my varied professional experience, I have found the greatest joy in sharing — in being a lifelong learner as well as a teacher. I feel enriched by every person I meet.

On a more personal level, I have been married to a musician and businessman, Dave Noble, for almost twelve years. We have no children, but we do have an English setter; Molly, who is the same age as our marriage. Our family will be moving to Estes at the end of April. We are looking forward to being surrounded by so much natural beauty, but I’m a little worried about symptoms of Wal-Mart withdrawal.

I enjoy reading, writing poetry and short stories, hiking, horseback riding, traveling, watching movies, going out to dinner, spending time with friends and family, listening to music, walking the dog, and rooting for the Broncos. (Perhaps I’ll start skiing again now that I’m employed full-time and can afford it.)

My immediate goals at Eagle Rock include getting to know each student on a personal level and becoming an advocate for each student’s physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth and well-being. I would also like to meet as many parents and sponsors as possible. I’m excited about the opportunity of working with new students by co-teaching ER 101 and 201. I’m also doing individual counseling and am planning to work with students and staff in developing one or more student support groups. Being the staff facilitator for students’ Personal Growth Portfolios and presentations is a wonderful opportunity to participate in the best part of Eagle Rock -- student self-awareness, growth, change, and success.

Longer term goals include working with other staff members on developing a comprehensive assessment program to help students identify their learning strengths and weaknesses and to assist them in improving their academic skills while pursuing their individual interests. I would also like to be involved with long-term research on outcomes for Eagle Rock students.

There are literally hundreds of opportunities to be creatively engaged in life at Eagle Rock. I’ve only discovered some of them, but I am looking forward to many years of exploring them all. Please contact me if you’d like to talk about any or all of these topics.

STUDENTS INVESTIGATE A TOXIC SITE

by Danielle Williams, Student
(reprinted with permission from From Under the Rock, February 19, 1999)

How would you like to drive up a road with gates to an entrance guarded by Security? Past the gates, you find yourself looking down a road that seems to lead nowhere. The Toxic Sludge class came upon one such road when they visited the Rocky Mountain Arsenal. At the Arsenal, the class watched a movie on how the Arsenal was working to clean itself up. Two class members, David Nguyen and Danielle Williams, had a chance to sit in on a Restoration Advisory Board Meeting.

The Arsenal is a toxic site that had been shut down five decades ago. In the 1940s during World War II, the Arsenal produced nerve gas. When the war was over, Shell Corporation manu-
EAGLE ROCK HOLDS ITS
OWN OLYMPICS

by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development

World history, athletics, and music added up to one glorious event in the minds of James Sherman, Social Studies Instructional Specialist; Colleen Graham, Human Performance Instructional Specialist; and Karolee McLaughlin, Music Adjunct Instructor. They, adjunct staff Mike Flynn, and intern Jon Anderson saw real possibilities in uniting the three fields in an interdisciplinary class on the Olympics called "Let the Games Begin" in January. And, naturally, the Olympics class had to end with...the Olympics.

Wednesday, February 17, the Eagle Rock Olympics began with a game of capture the flag. According to a story in the student newspaper "From Under the Rock," February 19, the "object of the game was to capture your opponent's flag and bring it over to your side of the field (more like a battle zone). Each contender carried a flag, hanging halfway out, on the back of their shorts. If anybody crossed the line into enemy territory, using evasive action, the opponents had the right to protect their territory." This event took a funny twist when the contenders resorted to "tying flags to their shorts and driving a CRV into" the other side's territory according to Alex Head, intern.

Ten track and field events ensued: "100, 200, and 400 meter races; a 4 X 4 relay, a 4 X 100 relay and a mile run, all segregated by gender," according to the story in the school newspaper. In the pool, there were "100 and 500 meter freestyle, 100 meter breast-stroke, 50 meter lifeguard buoy and a 50 meter kick board event... . There were also discus and shot-put events. As a finale, the Olympians competed in a chariot race and tug o' war."

The chariot races pitted the houses (student residences) against each other with each chariot (a metal disk) being pulled by a team of students. According to the newspaper article, "Lodgepole and Pinon were up ahead when, abruptly, Aspen pulled up behind them and slowed them down. Taking the first turn, Pinon took the inside corner. Exiting the turn, Aspen took an extraordinarily sharp turn and crashed into Pinon. Lodgepole used this accident to their advantage and pulled up to first position. Pinon managed to untangle quickly enough to take second place and Aspen came in third."

Studying Greek history and the history of the Olympics since the first games comprised the history part of this interdisciplinary course. For the music part, students learned to play the songs associated with the Olympics and treated competitors with their music.
AIKIDO: A CALM AND DEVASTATING ART

by C.J. Bush, Student
(reprinted with permission from From Under the Rock, March 5, 1999)

Aikido is not at all about strength. It is about a constant flow of energy. Water and wind are the elements that represent an unstoppable flow of energy, and I focus on these elements in my practice of Aikido. The mind needs to control the body in order to keep that flow moving. If the body is not soft and relaxed, it can be stopped by a force greater than it. These two elements are calm and devastating, and Aikido focuses on both these qualities. Being calm in a situation shows nobility, and with this calmness you can think and process and be very powerful at the same time.

If Aikido were to be broken down to its simplest form it means this: Ai - harmony, unity and to join. Ki - spirit; life force or universal creative energy. Do - the way or path. Together, these characteristics are what Aikido stands for, peace and harmony. In Aikido, life can be preserved without breaking someone up, but you can’t forget that the power is still there to hurt someone. The more you choose not to fight, the more you will grow. It is never good to go into a situation bullheaded because it limits your growth, your understanding and your compassion. If care is shown in a situation of violence, the person who is displaying violence will start to understand your point of view because you give him nothing to fight against.

Before Aikido was introduced to me I had problems with fighting. I did not want anyone to think I was weak, so I would fight just so my friends could see how bad I was. I always thought if a person could not fight he was a nobody -- just another person who needed to be protected. I later found out that was not the case at all; those who did not fight were the ones who chose not to.

If I had never found Aikido, I would still be fighting. When I came to Eagle Rock, I was a little scared because I thought someone would pick a fight with me and I would end up back home. That never happened, and I was told that we were to attend a mandatory martial arts class. I stepped onto the mats and listened to Jim Cox, the Aikido teacher at Eagle Rock. He was giving the class the history of Aikido and how it came about. I knew it was for me; I was looking for a change and this was the answer. All this time I had wasted, destroying others’ souls and mine, not knowing how powerful the tongue and fist were and how they hurt people.

I remember going home for a break and my friends noticing a change -- they could not understand why I did not want to go and pick a fight or stir up crap. I told them that my goal was to stay away from destroying people who could be my friends. I will never forget the power of choosing not to hurt someone.

Aikido is not about how fast I can do a technique or how much I can hurt and break someone up; it is how I deal with myself and my feelings. I know if I can’t deal with my own feelings and how I control them, there is no chance I can deal with a physical situation without hurting people. Being at peace with one’s self is more powerful than speaking about peace. It is best sometimes to sit somewhere and make peace with yourself before you enter the world. If peace is in the soul, then you can practice Aikido in its best form; you can be one with yourself and with others and stay centered.

NOTE: Aikido is required of all new students and offered as a Friday night activity to all veteran students.